

Page by Paige

Laura Lee
Gulledge


Everyone sees a quiet redhead who
draws things. But when I close my
eyes, I'm laughing and screaming
and scheming and daydreaming.

New city. New friends. New Paige?

When Paige's parents move her family
from Virginia to New York City,
Paige doesn't know where she fits
in anymore. At first, the only thing
keeping her company is her notebook,
where she pours her worries and
observations and experiments with
her secret identity: ARTIST. With
the confidence the book brings her,
she starts to make friends and
shake up her family's expectations.
But is she ready to become the
person she draws in her notebook?

Laura Lee Gullledge's stunning art
digs deep into the soul and exposes
all the ups, downs, and sideways
feelings of being a young adult on
the edge of the rest of your life.





WILLIAM HENRY HARRIS
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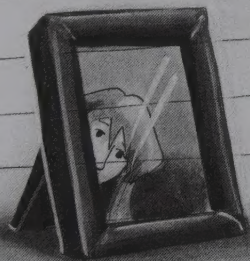
Laura Lee Gulledge



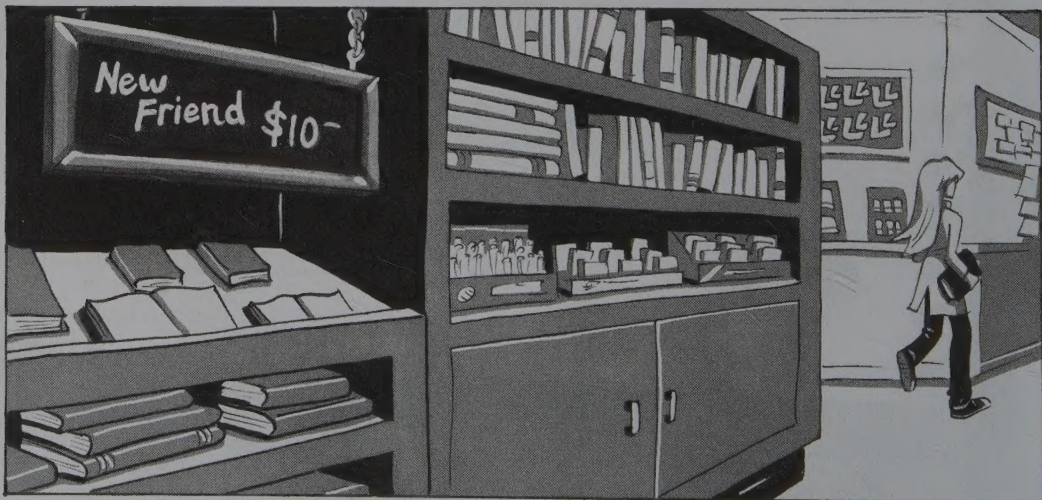
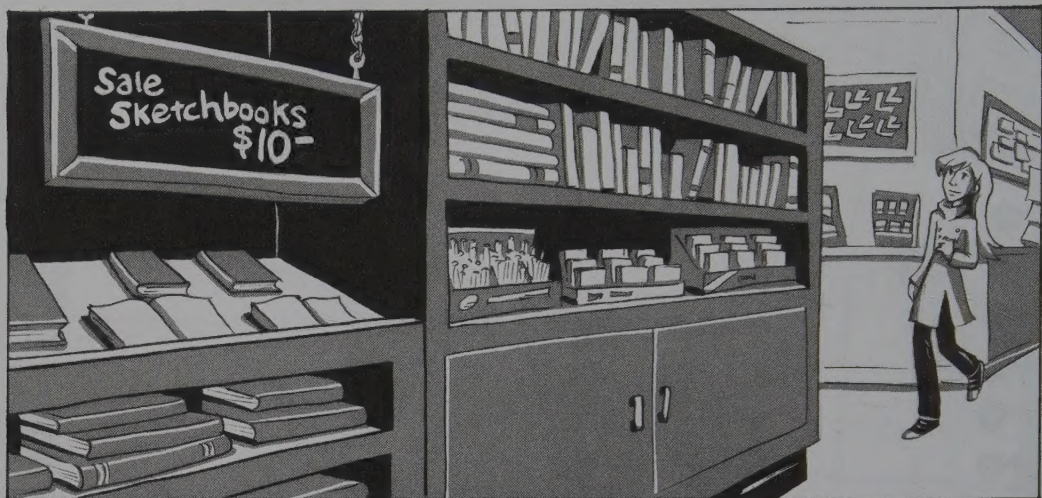
AMULET BOOKS
NEW YORK

Sketchbook
Rule #1

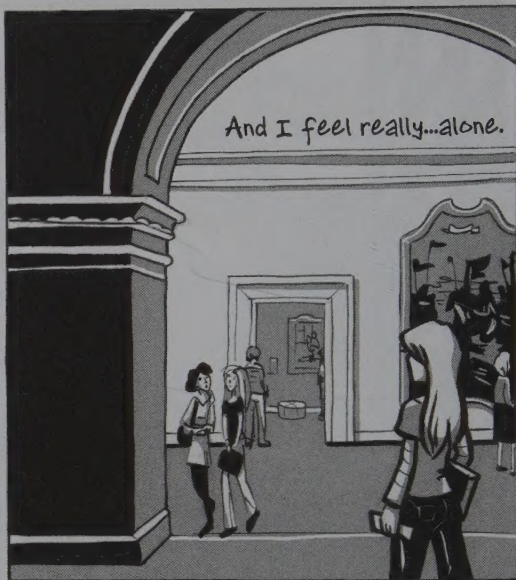
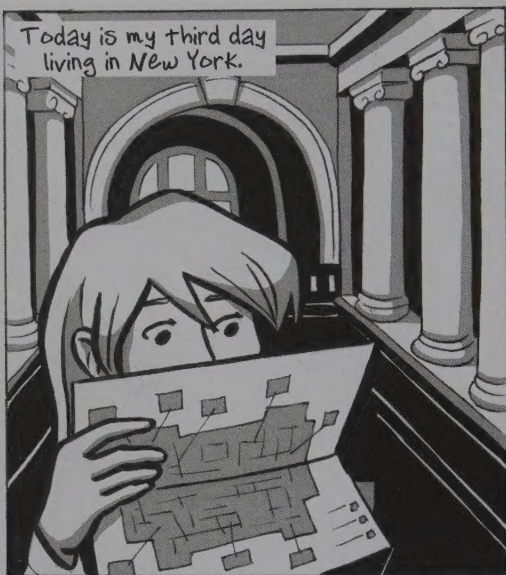
No more excuses!
Buy a sketchbook and draw
a few pages each week.



-December-

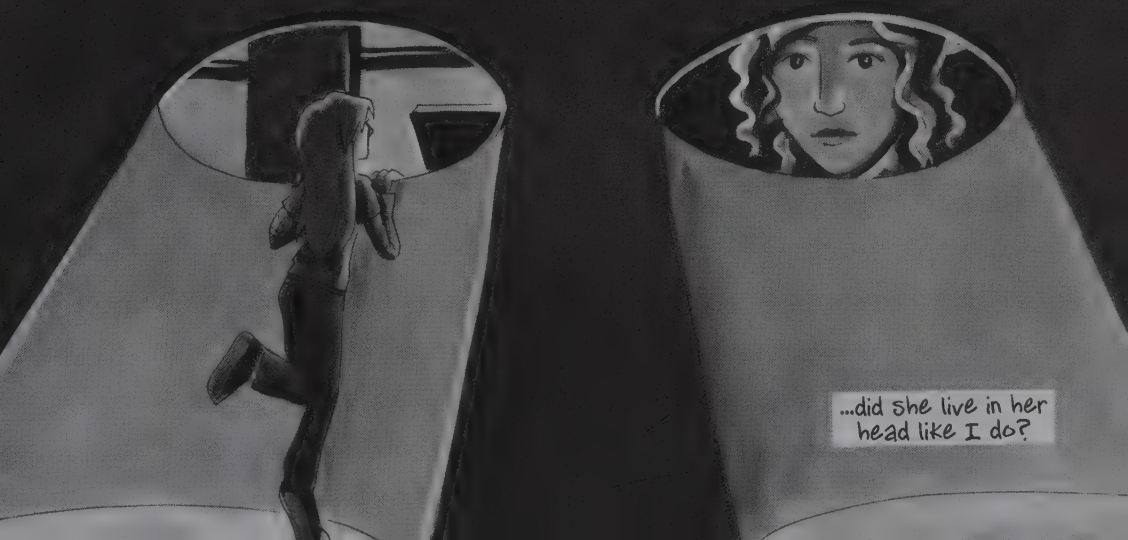




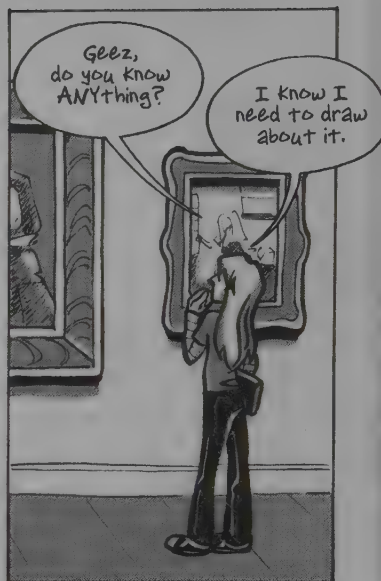




And she's an artist.
I wonder...



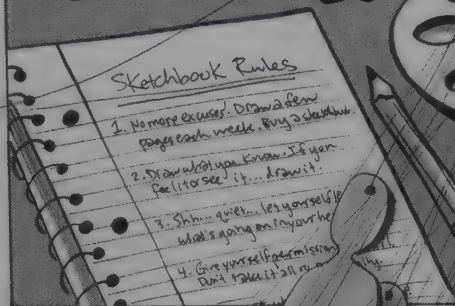
...did she live in her
head like I do?



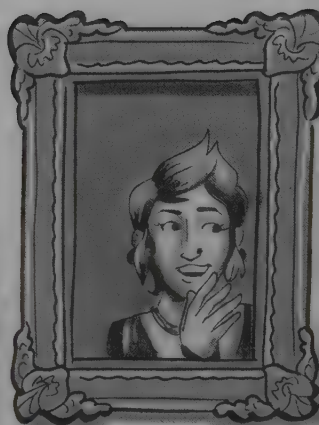
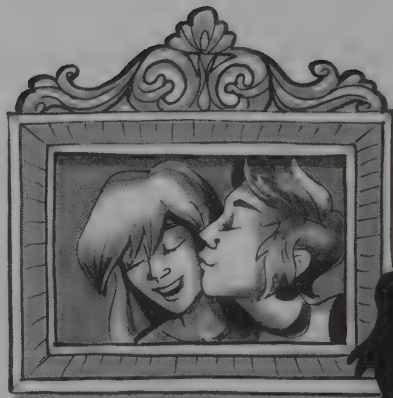
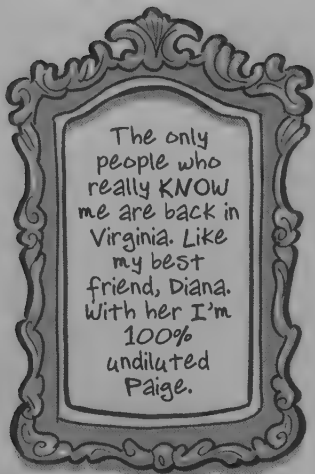
It helped my grandma.
She was a painter.



And she came up with her own rules as
she taught herself how to be an artist.
So I'm trying out her lessons.



I wish she was here. In this city,
I feel so lost. It's like I'm
surrounded by two-dimensional people.

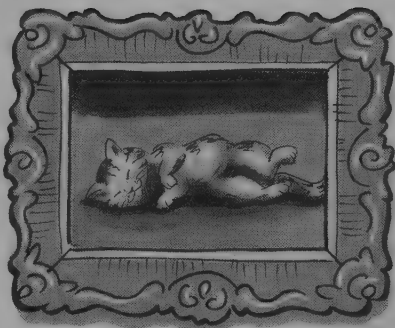


I miss our hikes on Carter Mountain, our finger painting nights, and drawing games in chemistry class...



But I'm not
totally alone,
because I moved
here with my
parents.

They're writers.
Hence my name
is Paige Turner.
A name destined
to write
acclaimed books.
Or something.



Oh, and we also brought along
Harley. Best. Cat. Ever.



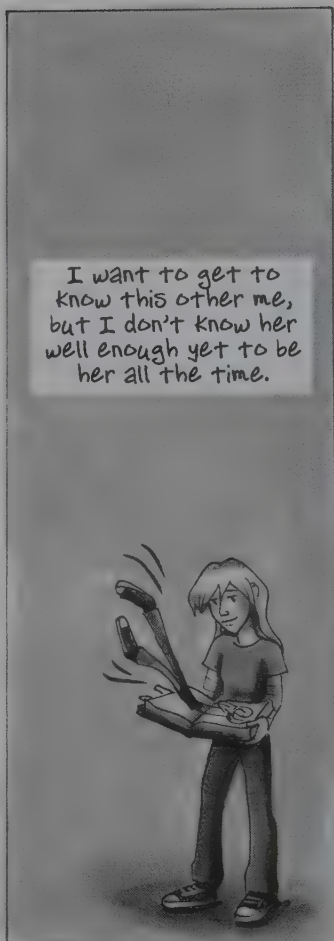
*But I don't feel totally like
myself around them. I bite my tongue a lot.
It just makes things easier...*

My parents, like most everybody else, see this version of me: The quiet redhead who draws stuff.



But when I close my eyes, I'm more like
THIS under the surface: I'm laughing and
screaming and scheming and daydreaming.





I want to get to
know this other me,
but I don't know her
well enough yet to be
her all the time.



So for now she'll
only live on paper.
In this sketchbook.

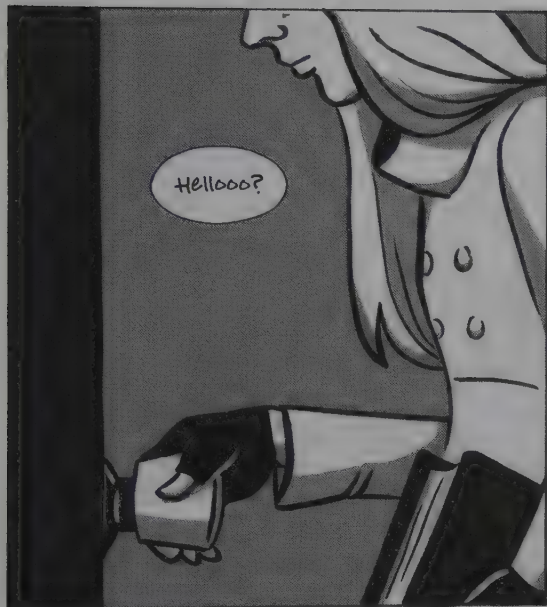
Living quietly feels safer.
But artists draw inspiration from
challenges, right? What have I
learned from playing it safe?



This is my new home:
Brooklyn.



It's not as hectic as Manhattan, but it's still
really weird going from a house with a big yard to
a brownstone with a big stoop.



Hellooo?



Hey, Mom.

Hi, baby girl!



How was your day?

Fine.

How was the museum?

Good.

Was it crowded?

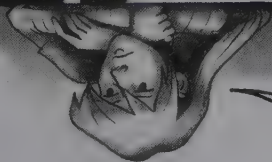
Nope.

Did you have any trouble with the subway?

No.

What paintings did you see?

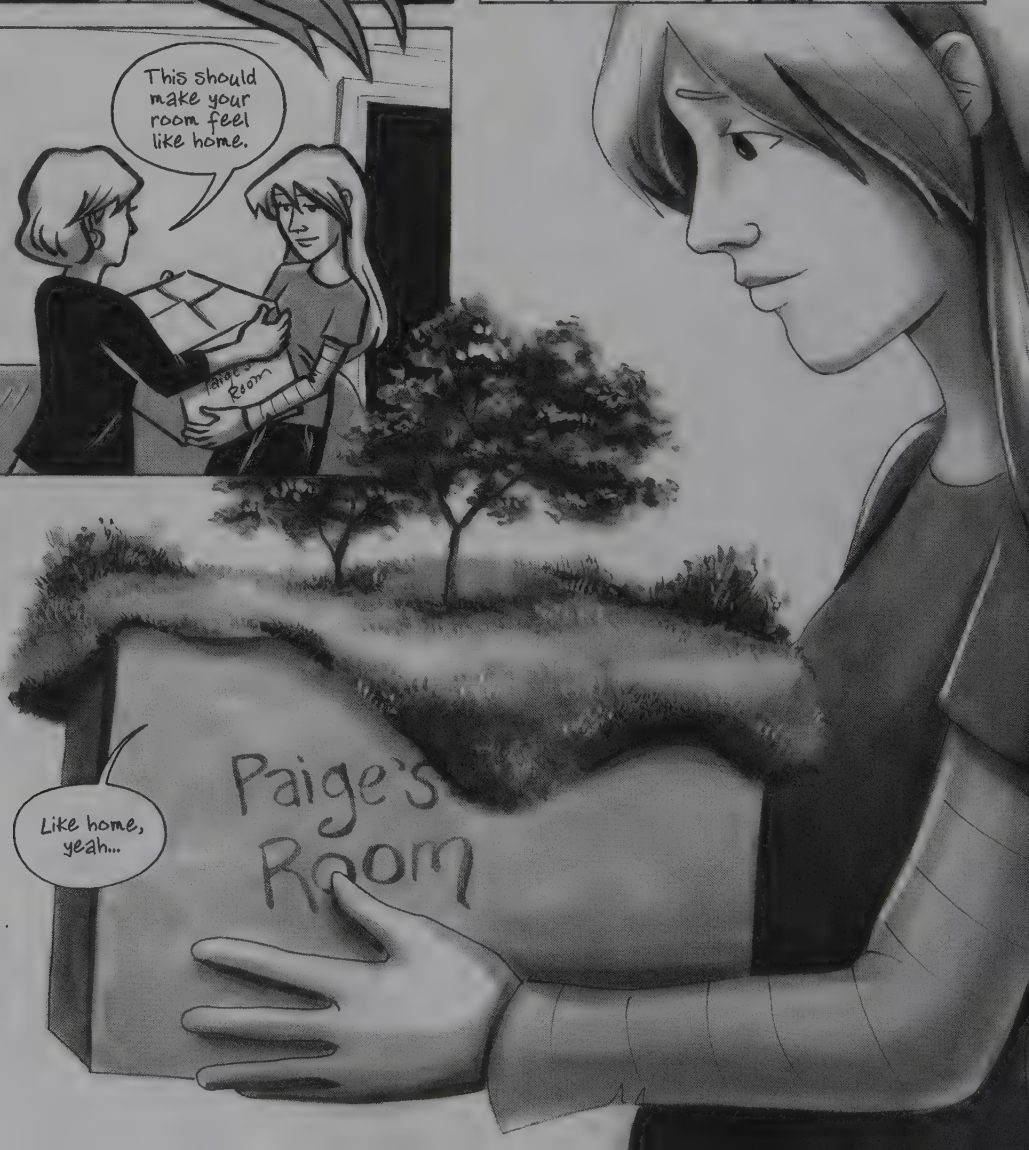
A bunch.

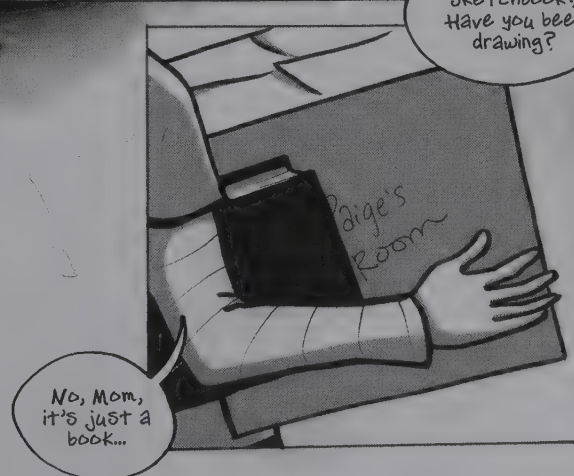
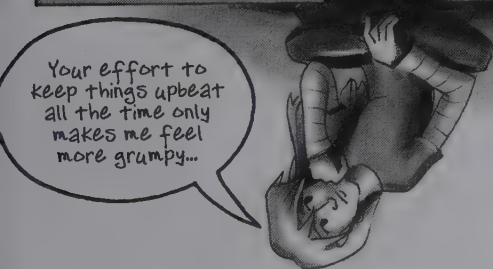


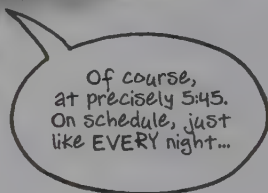
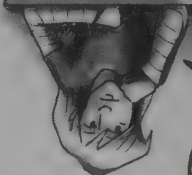
Why do we keep the furniture covered all the time? Is THIS a museum?



I always feel like you're interviewing me...









I didn't expect to
be so homesick.

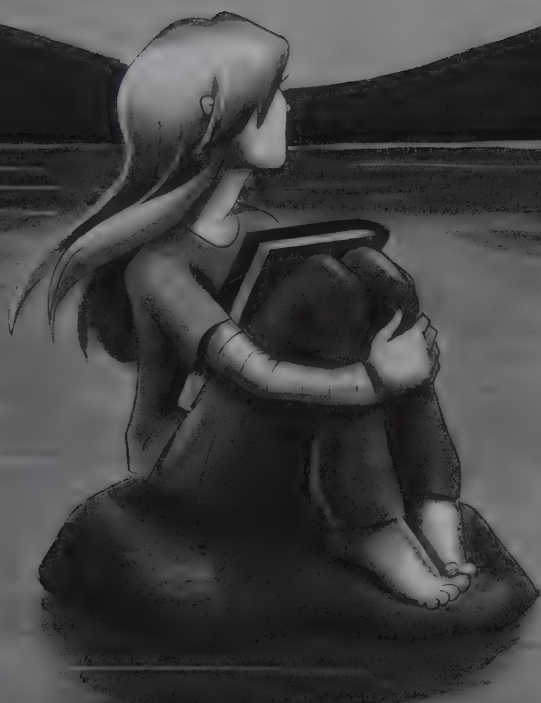


I miss having a yard, I
miss mountains, I miss
nature. That's home.

And I hate how all my friends now live in picture frames.



Without them, I'll just
have to rely on myself.
And this sketchbook.
And some pencils.
And a LOT of erasers.
I am a redheaded island.



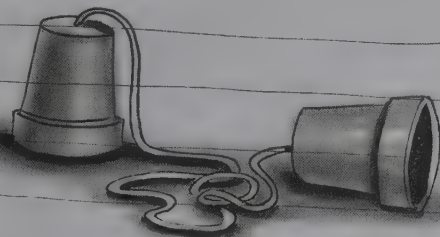


Where to start? Well, according to Grandma, the only thing you have control over as an artist is **HOW MUCH** art you make. Don't worry about the path; just go.

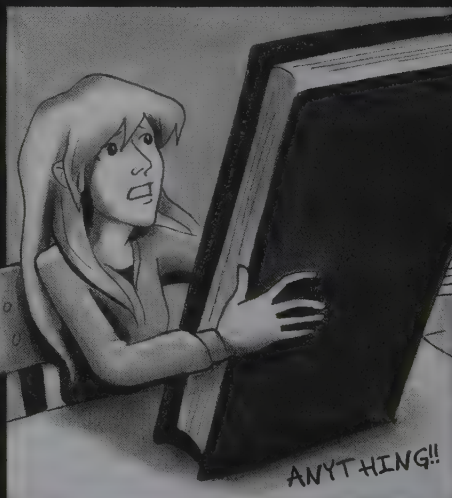
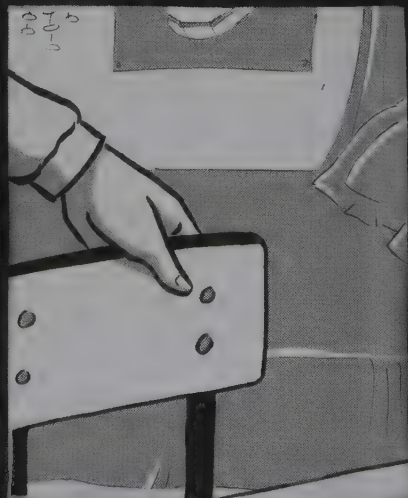
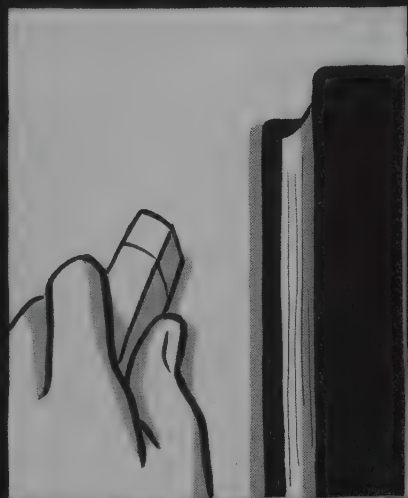
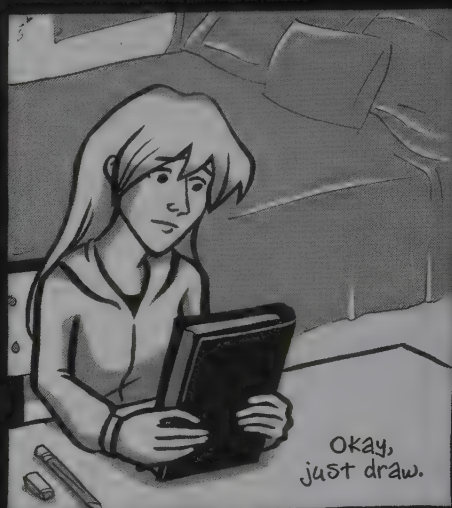
So I'll do a few pages each week,
focusing on one drawing at a time.
Page by page...or rather, page by Paige.

Rule #2

Draw what you know.
If you feel it or see it...
DRAW IT!



- Still December -



What is
THAT
supposed to be?

What if my drawings
really suck?
I can't tear them
out of the sketchbook,
they'll stay there...

Shouldn't you
be doing
something
more
important?

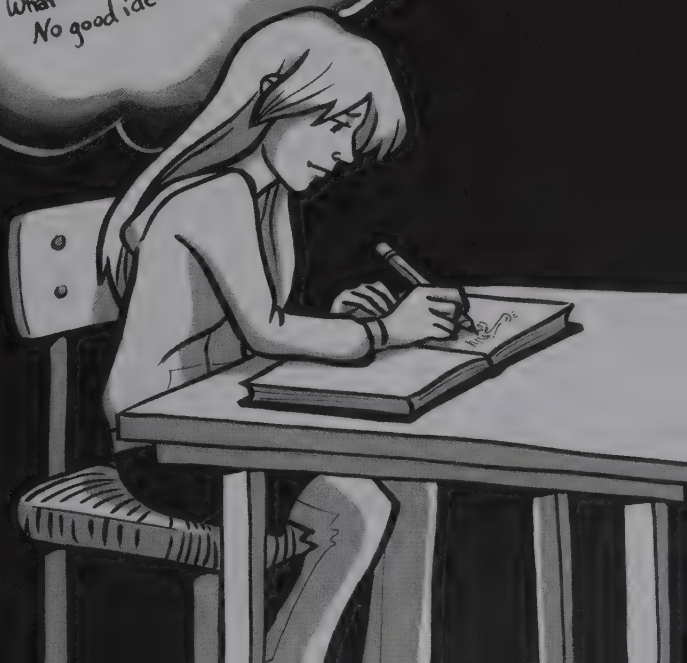
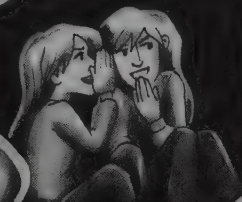
Art is just
Silly and
Pointless,
you know...

Grandma was a
REAL artist;
you're just
pretending.

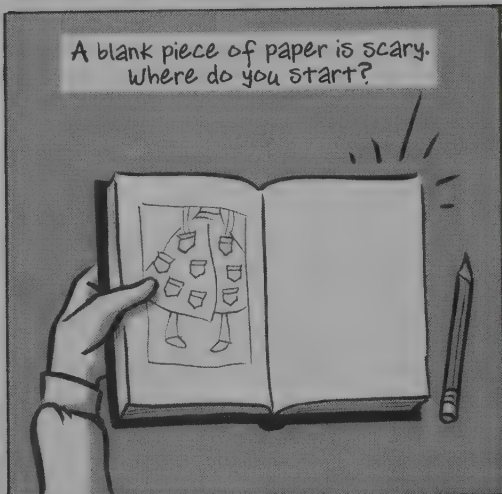
Who cares?
Why bother?

You're going to
fail, so why
even try?

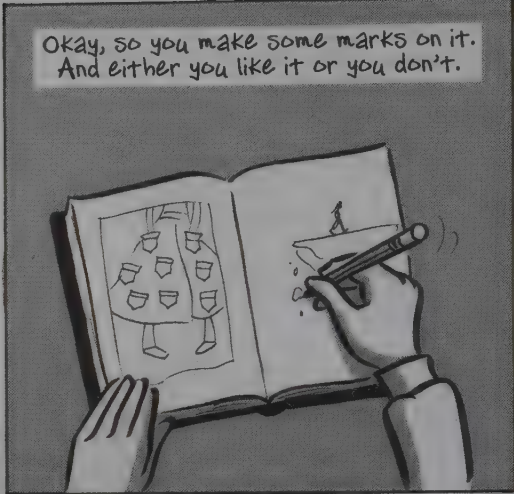
What if I have nothing to say?
No good ideas at all?



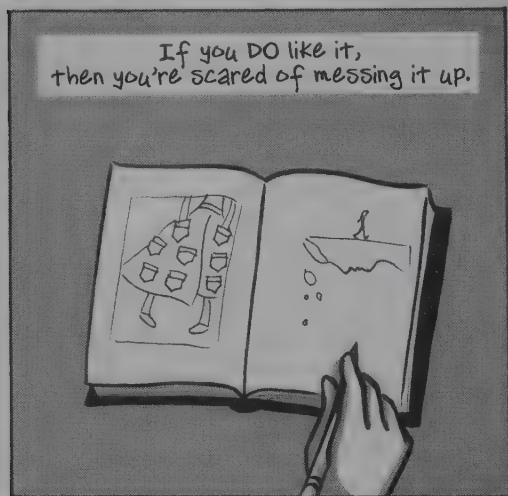
A blank piece of paper is scary.
Where do you start?



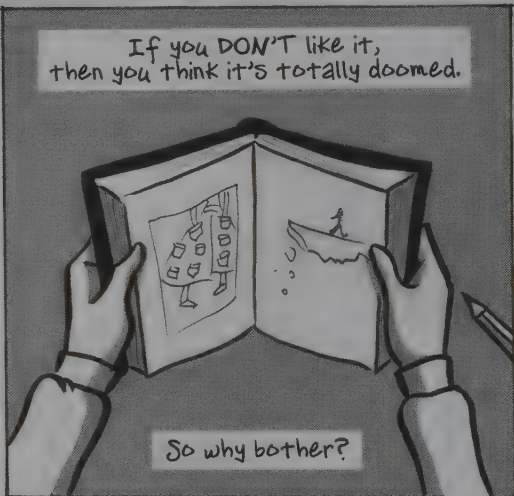
Okay, so you make some marks on it.
And either you like it or you don't.



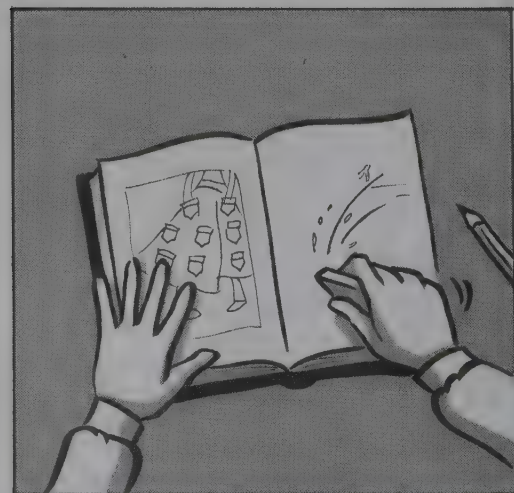
If you DO like it,
then you're scared of messing it up.



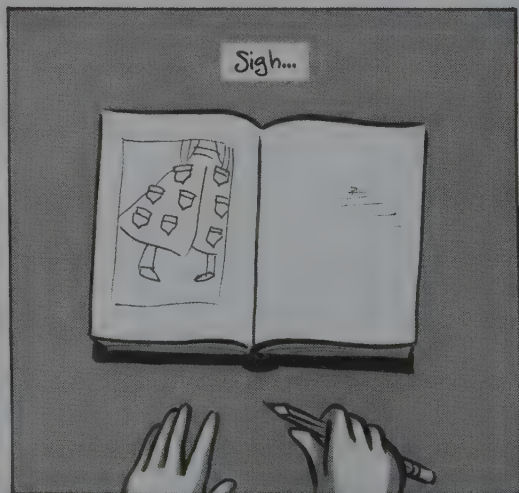
If you DON'T like it,
then you think it's totally doomed.

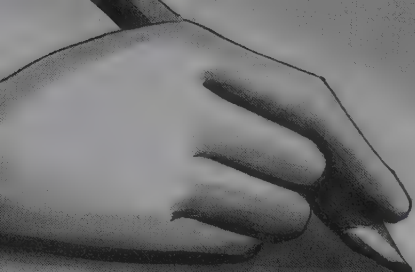


So why bother?



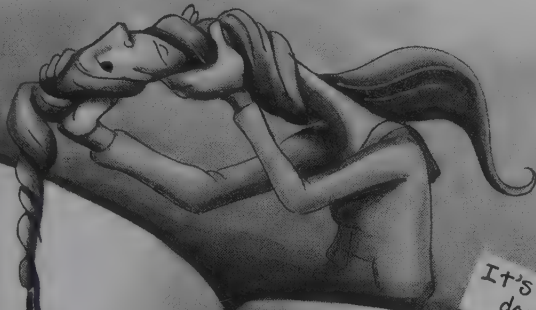
Sigh...





okay, I'm frustrated. I can just draw about that.

It feels like this.



It's like I'm trying to listen, but I don't understand the language.



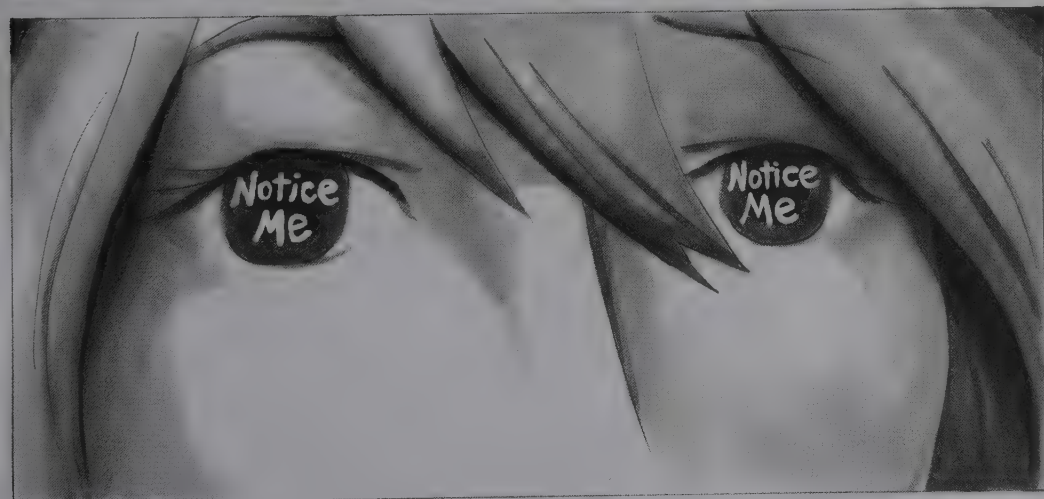
Og þú veist
hvað þeir heita!
Er það ekki?!



I must be making this too hard.
I should draw what I know.
But what do I know?

So I went out for inspiration...



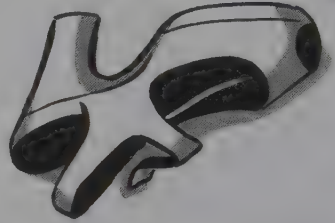


So what do I like about New York?

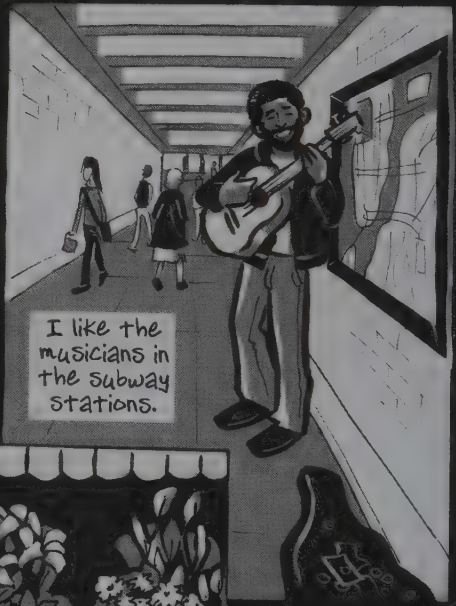
I like how tops
of buildings dissolve
into fog.



I like lost
shoes. How
did this one
escape from
its owner?



I like the
musicians in
the subway
stations.



I like flower
stalls. (Especially
ones with lilies.)



I like trash day.
People throw out
the weirdest things.



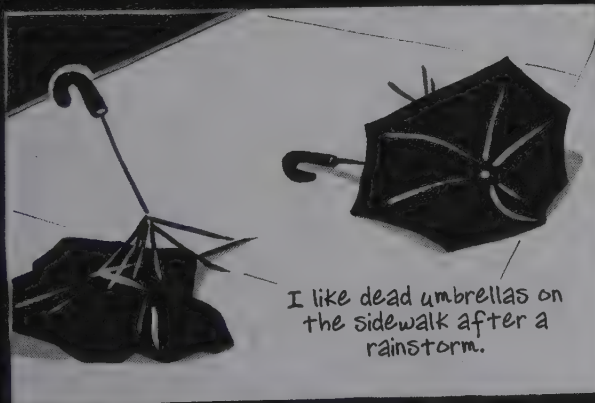
I like that
anything
goes.



I like people-watching.
It's like window-shopping.



I like dead umbrellas on
the sidewalk after a
rainstorm.

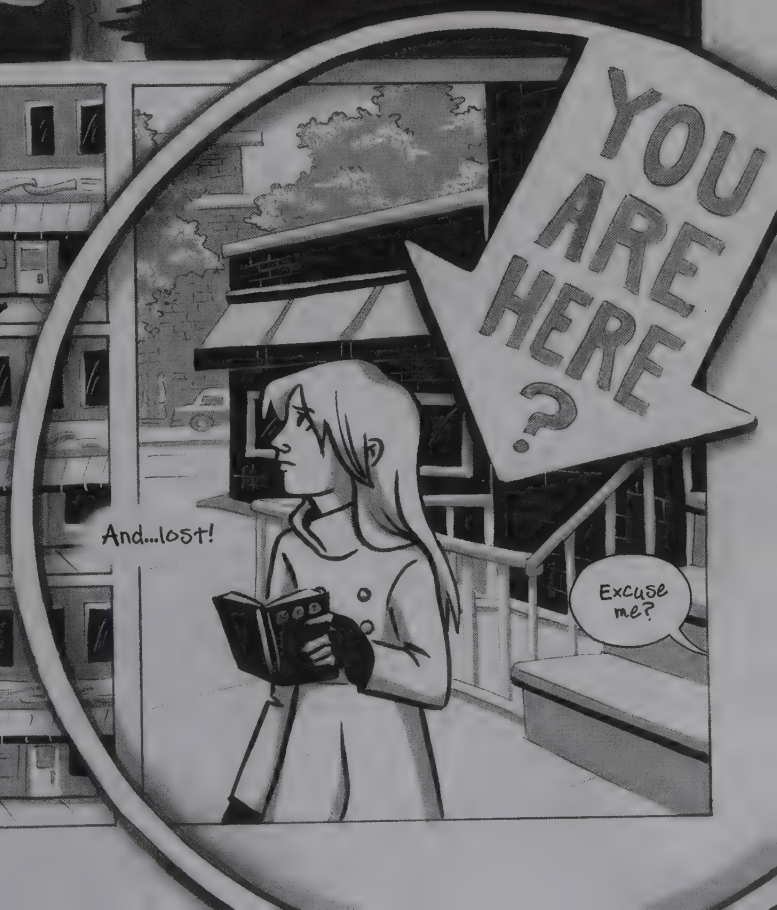
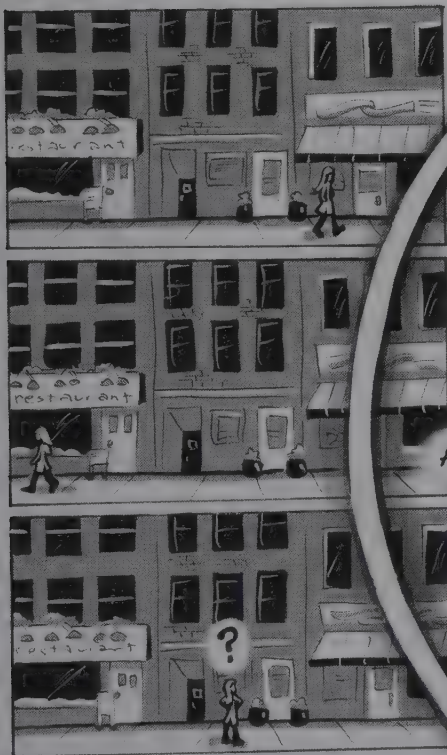


But this city isn't perfect.
It takes some adjusting.

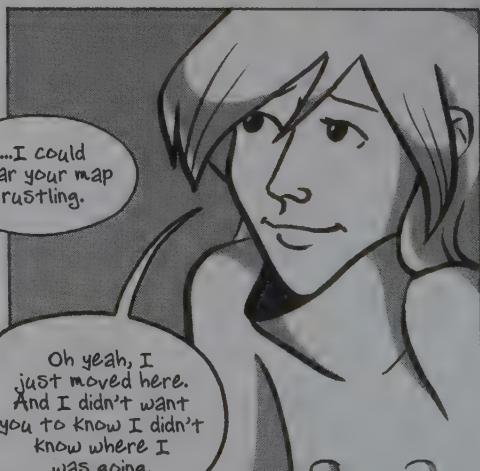
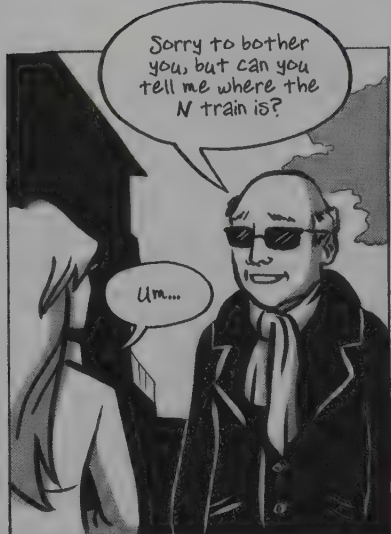
For example, it makes me
feel really small.



And nervous.



And...lost!





So many ideas! Now I can go home and draw about them!









"Ahh home. Let me
Come home. Home is wherever
I'm with you."



Helloooo,
Diana!

Happy New
Year's, Paige!

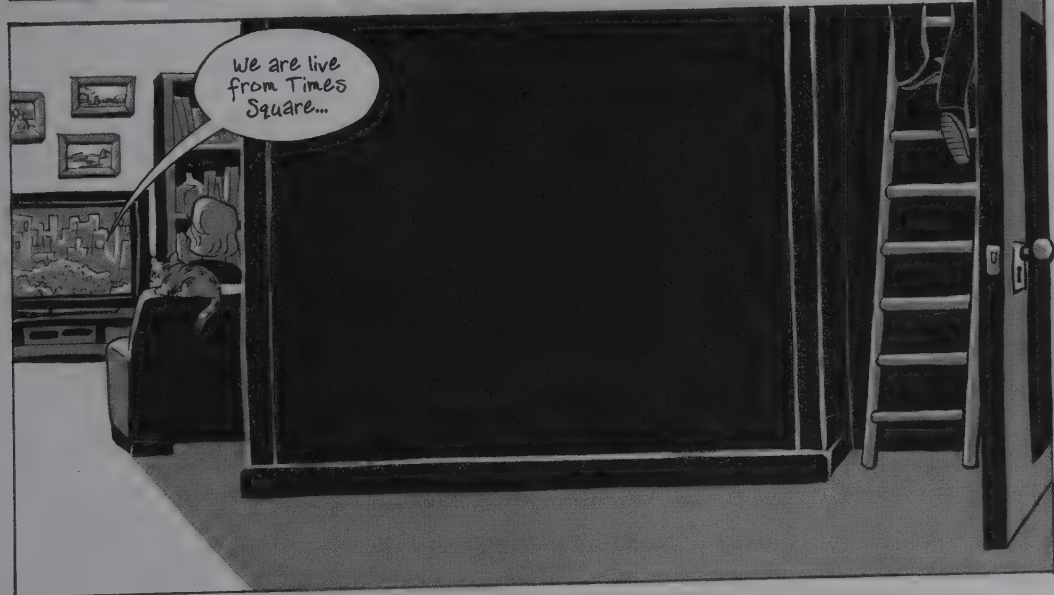
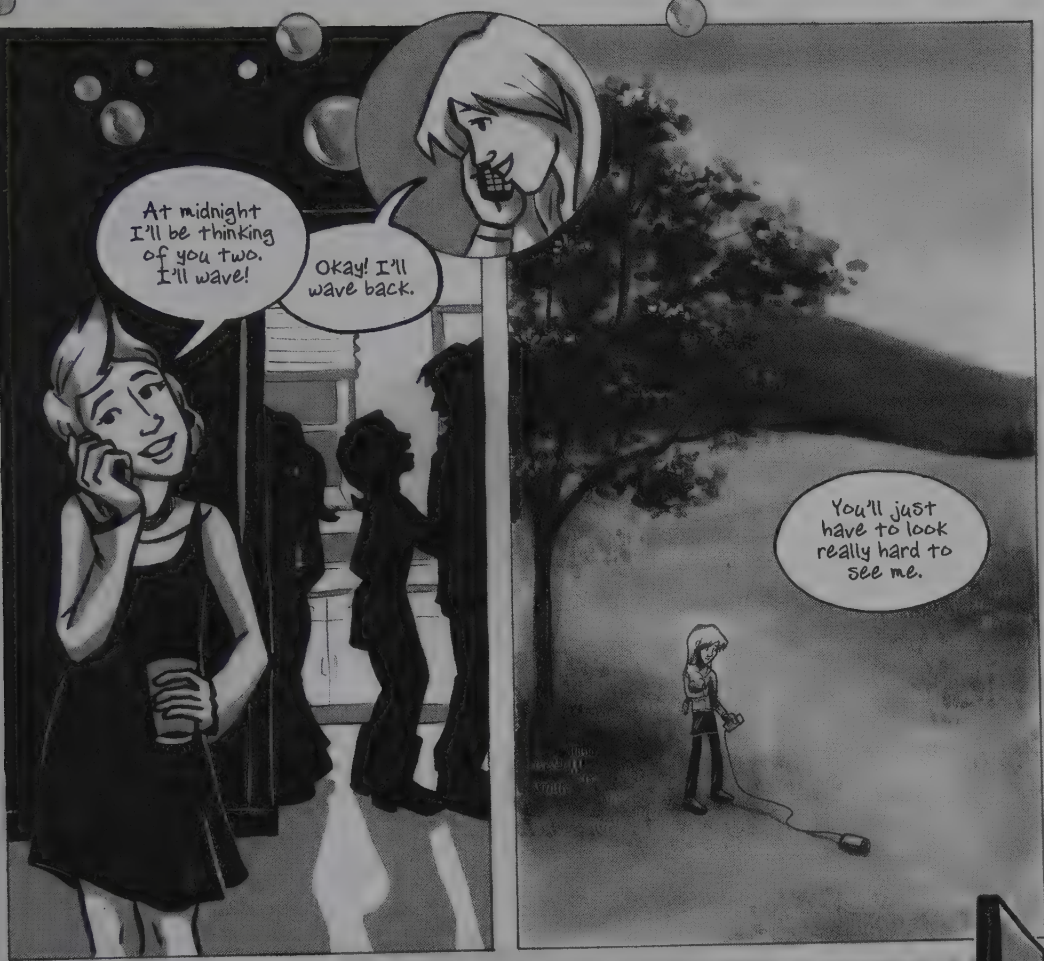
You too!
Oh, it's so good to
hear your voice.
I miss you so
much!

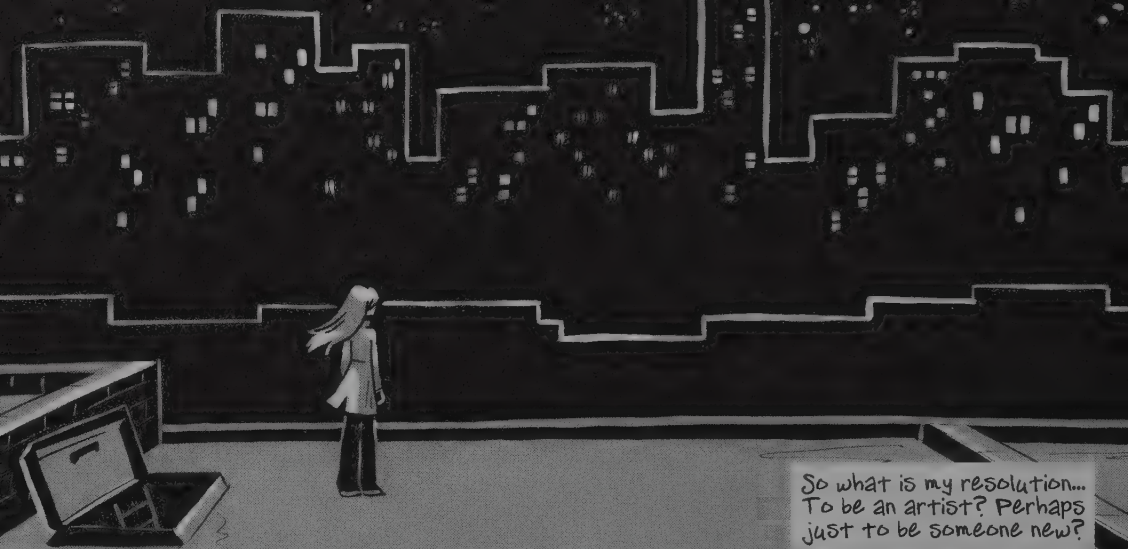
We're missing
you, too. We're all
hanging out at Devo's
place. Wish you could
be here!

Me, too! I'll just
be hanging out here
with our favorite
sexy brunette.

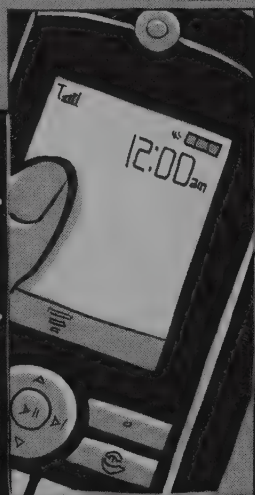
Harley? I.
Love. That.
Cat.







So what is my resolution...
To be an artist? Perhaps
just to be someone new?



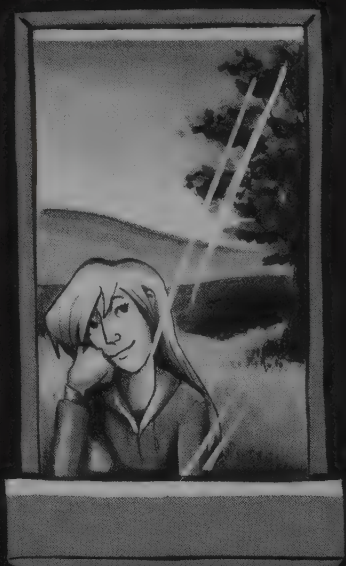
New year. New phone.



New city.



New Paige.



Rule #3

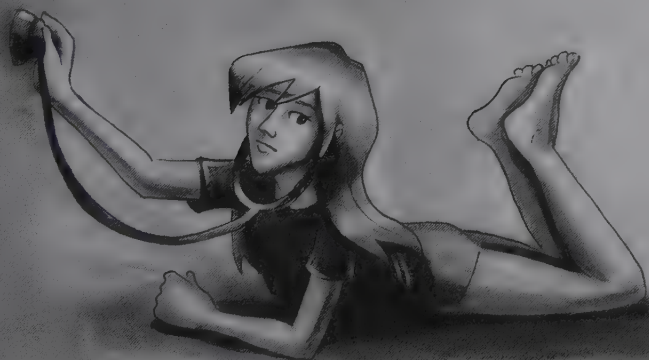
Shhh... quiet...
listen to what's going
on in your head.



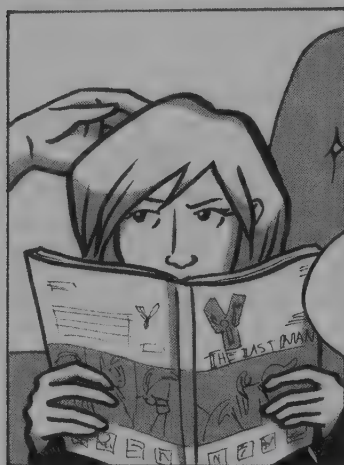
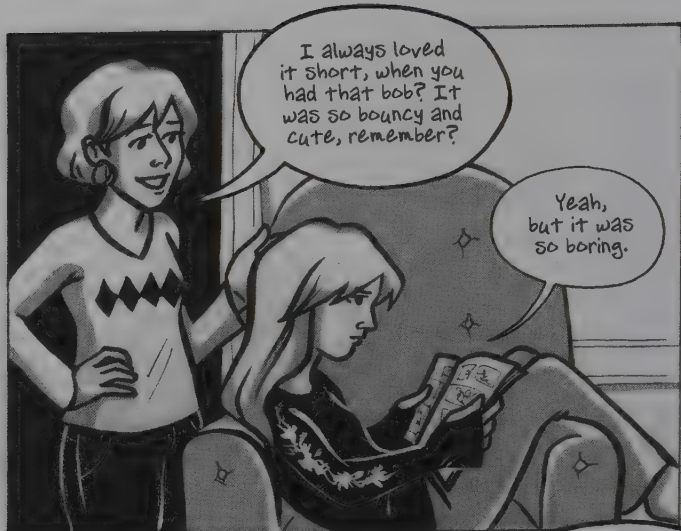
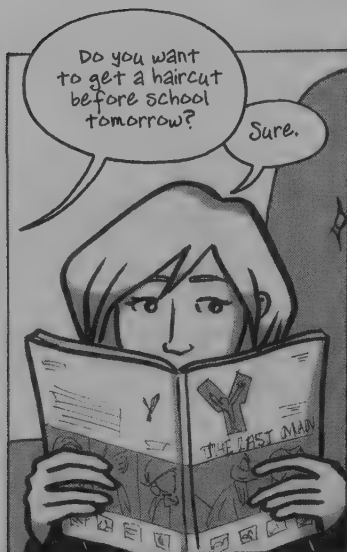
-January-

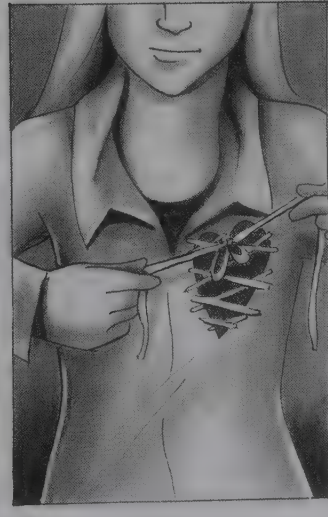
what if I want to start a new school
what if I'm really behind?
I don't
Don't be so nervous
why did we move here?
sigh
I don't belong here
stop thinking about it
I will be behind the other students
why did we have to move
I miss my friends
I feel alone, really alone
I don't know
I miss home
I miss my old room
shhhh...
easier said than done
I feel so alone
shhhh...
I'm not a city girl
maybe
stop thinking
It's so cold here
I wonder what Diana is doing
Shut up! brain off
stop thinking
This sucks. I miss trees, and mountains
what if I miss my old school
I can't help but worry about this
why did Dad have to get a new job?
what's wrong with the old one
I miss my old school
This is unfair!
Sigh.
blah blah

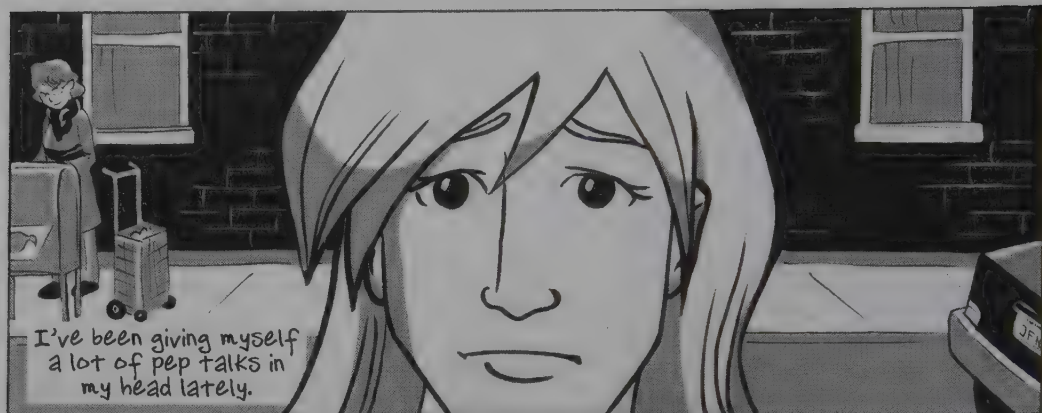


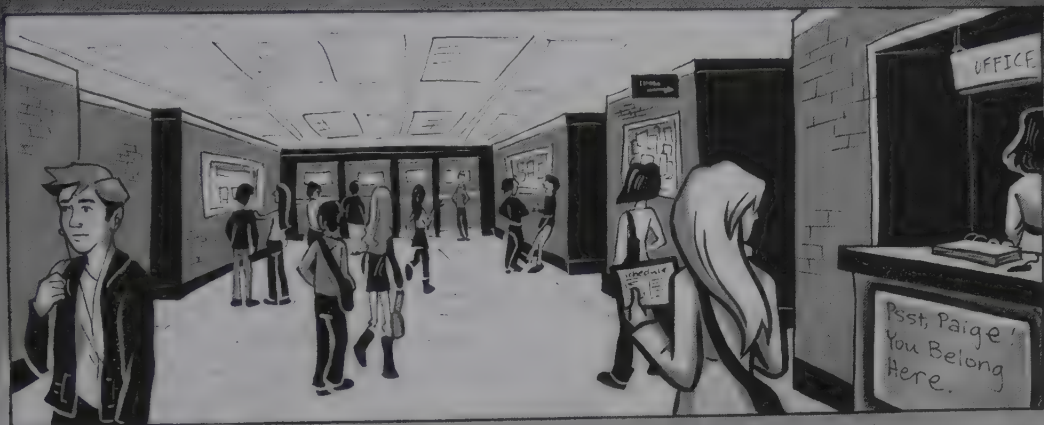


The inside of my head
is a loud place.









I tell myself that everyone
else feels alone, too.





It feels like everyone is watching and waiting for me to embarrass myself.



I miss Diana.

So... "The Great Gatsby." That's a great book!

Have you already read it?

Yeah, I had to read it over the summer.

It actually got soaked at a car wash, and to dry it my dad told me to put it in the OVEN to evaporate the water, and it worked,

but it also evaporated the glue binding the pages together, so all the pages fell out all over the floor, and it took forever to put all the pages back in order!

It was, um, funny...

Massive. Joke. Fail.

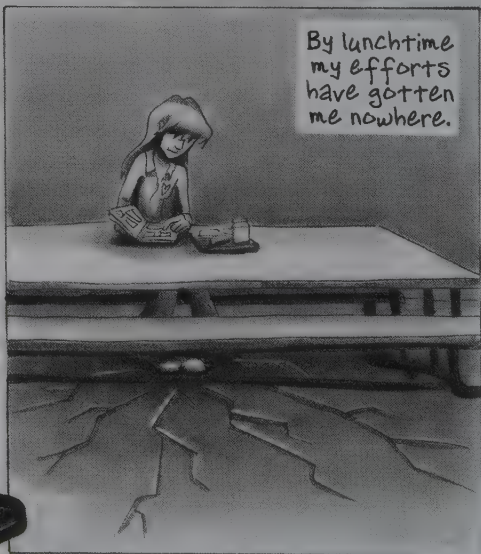
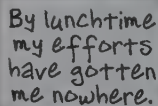
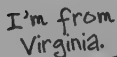
I only find myself answering the same few questions anyway. I wish I had it printed on cards that I could simply hand over to people.

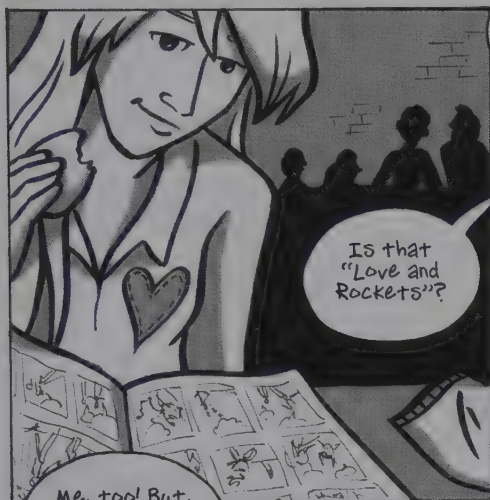
My name is Paige.
I just moved here from Charlottesville, Virginia, with my parents because they had got a new job...

I look for excuses to strike up conversations.

I do have rambling-trailing-off tendencies...

I try to appear interesting, but these kids





Is that
"Love and
Rockets"?

Me, too! But,
you know, in a
straight sort
of way.*

Well, that's
a pity. But I
don't think
you're her type
anyway.

Um, yeah.
"Locas."

Niiice! I just
love Maggie.
And Hopey, of
course.



Well, I'll
see you
around!

I'm Jules.
What's yours?

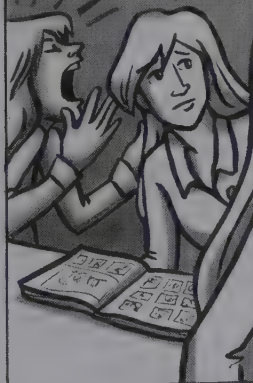
Paige
Turner.

Paige
TURNER?

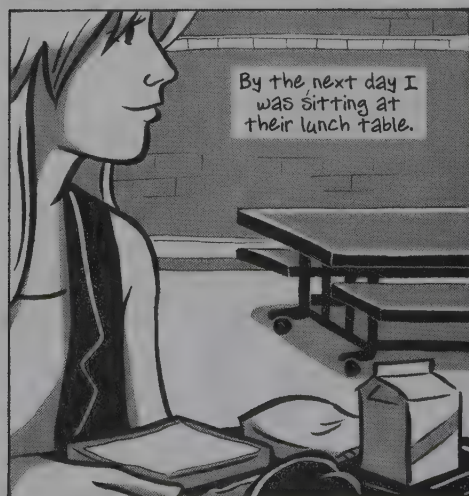
My parents
are writers...

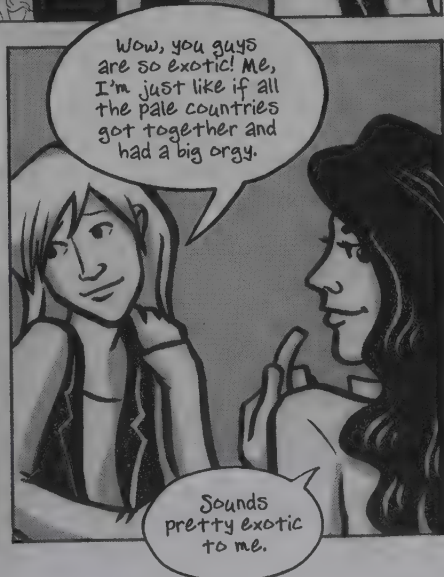
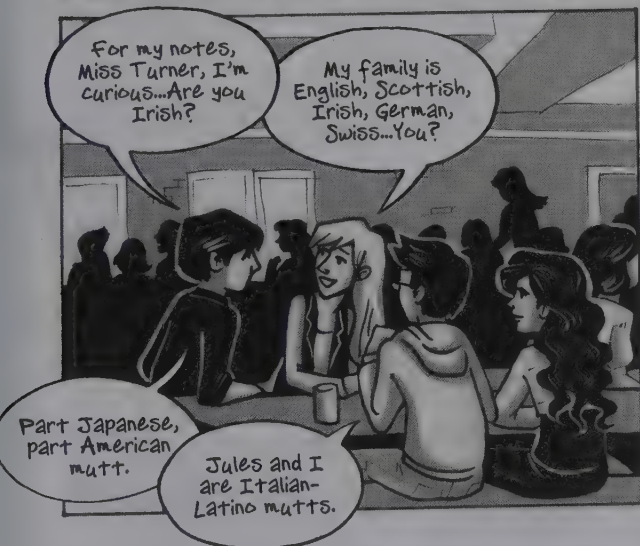
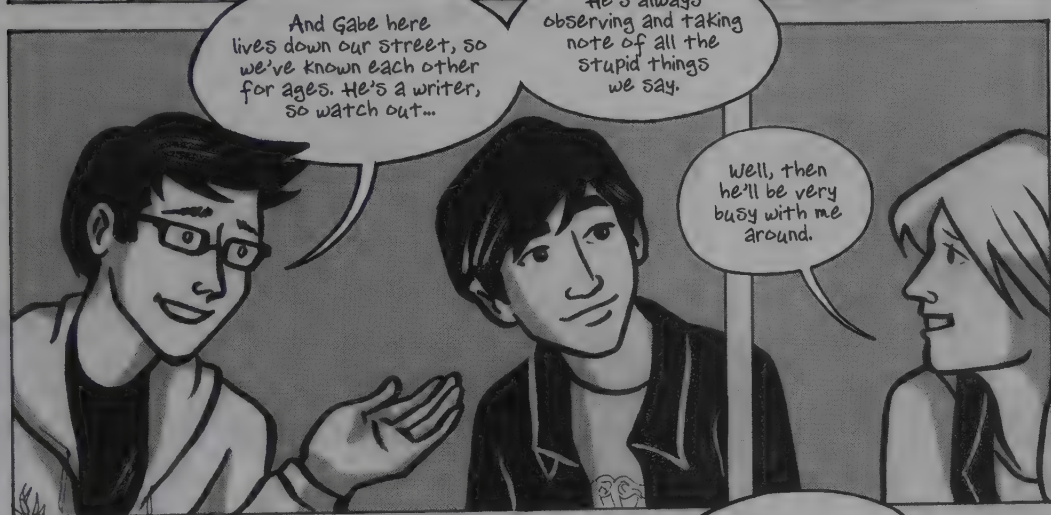
Wait! What's
your name?

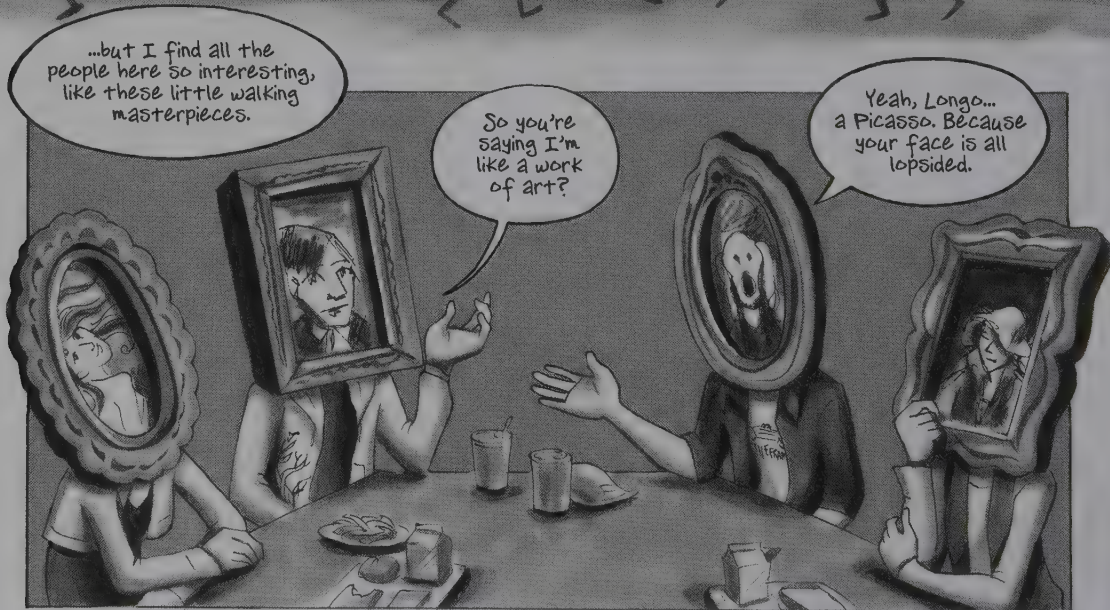
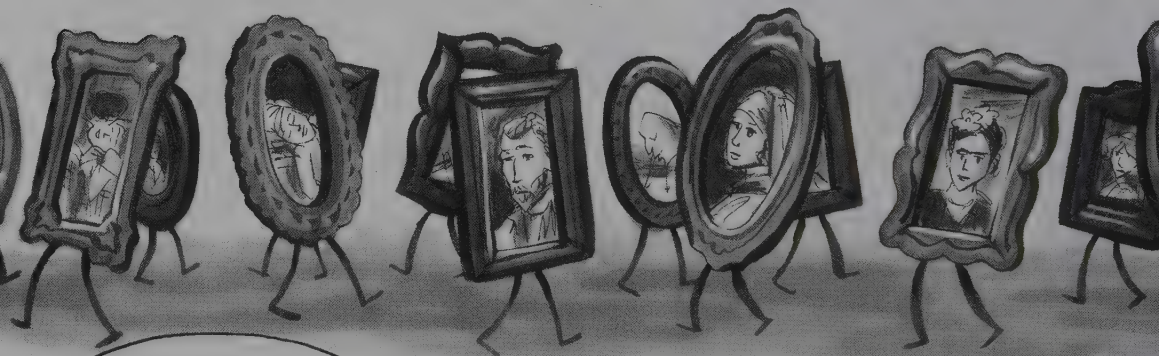
SPEAK!!
SAY SOMETHING!!

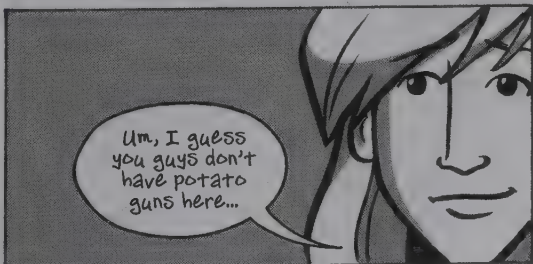
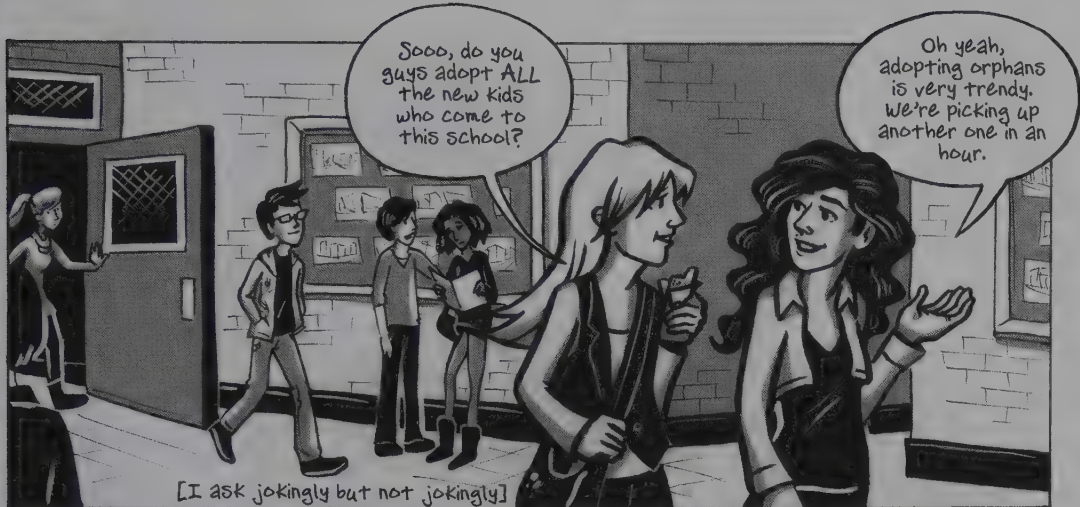


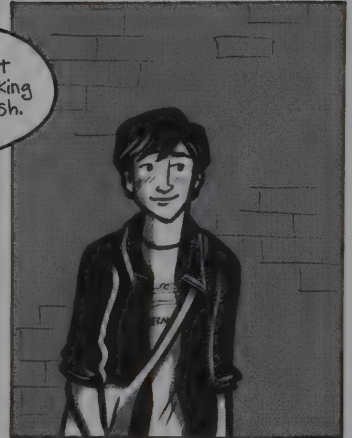
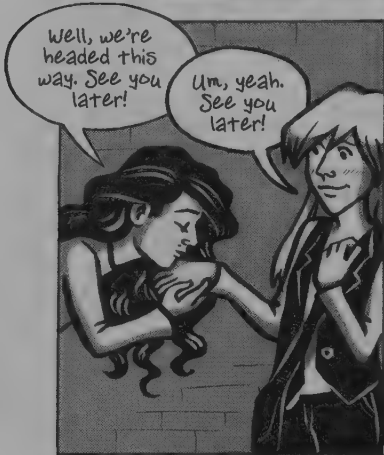
*Hopey is gay.

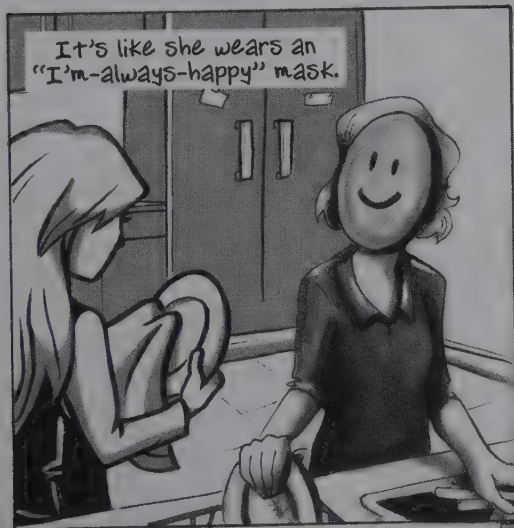


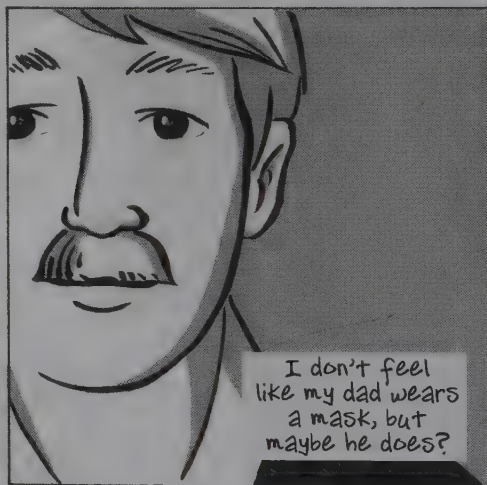




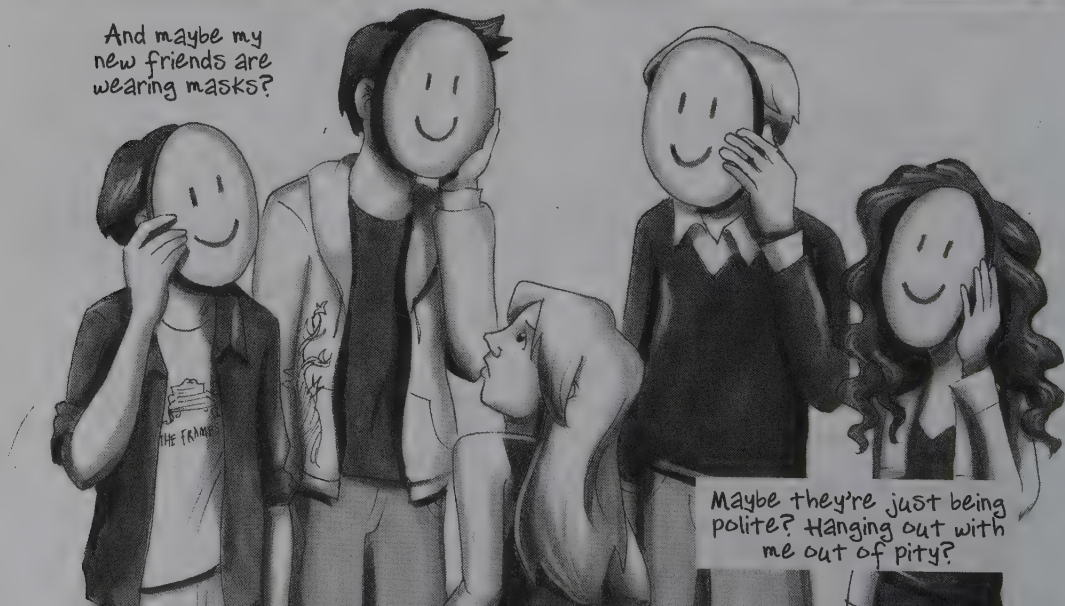






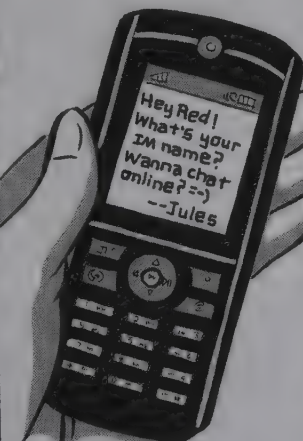


And maybe my new friends are wearing masks?

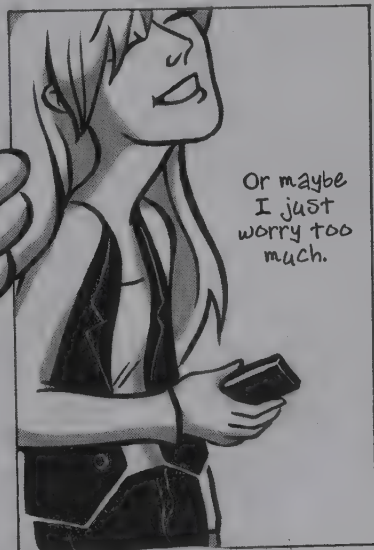




I feel like
I'm swirling
down the drain...



Hey Red!
What's your
IM name?
Wanna chat
online? :-)
--Jules



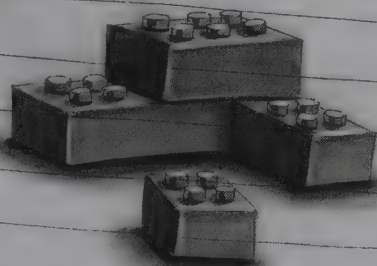
Or maybe
I just
worry too
much.



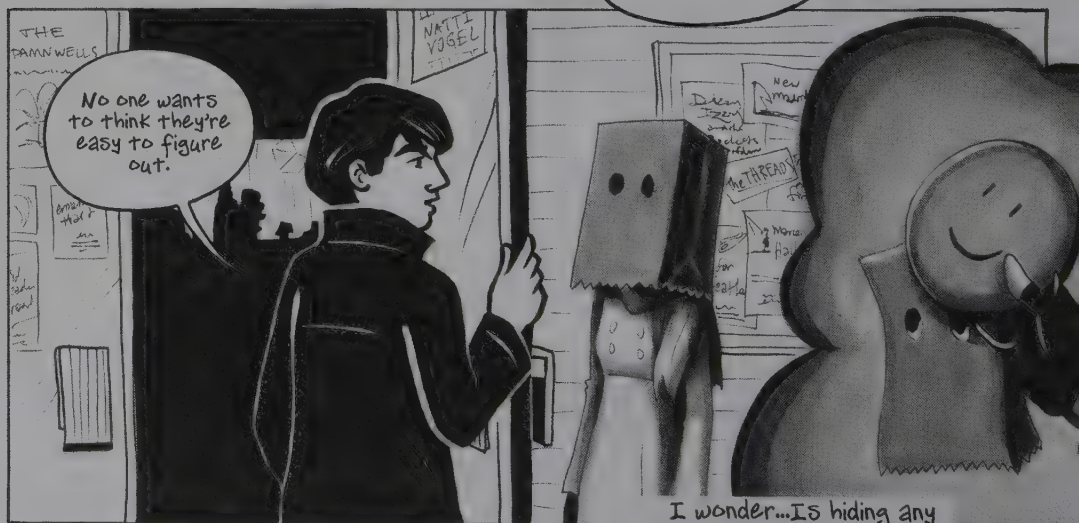
Now my head is swirling
in a different way...
with ideas.

Rule #4

Let yourself FAIL.
Don't take it all so
personally.



-February-



I've always been scared of
revealing too much, saying the
wrong thing, screwing up...

2112

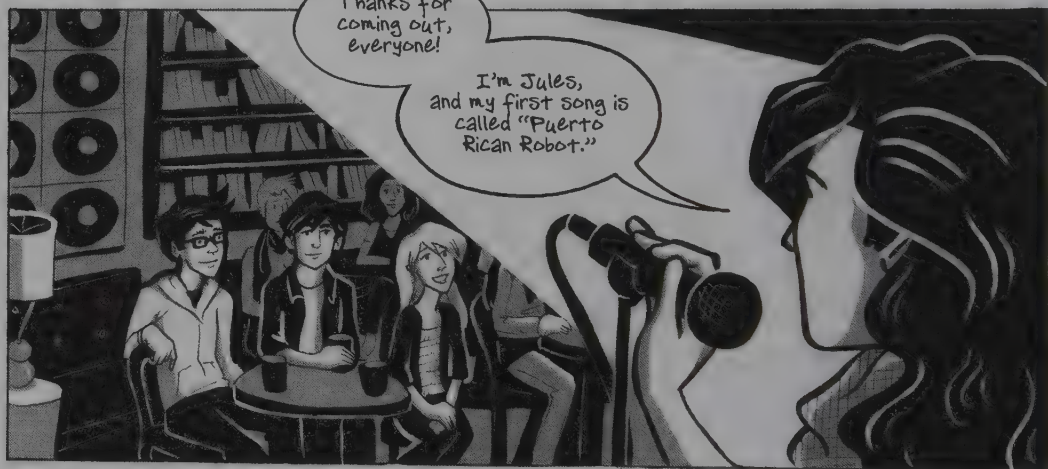


I guess that's why I'm
keeping this sketchbook
to myself. It's easier to
stay off the radar.

Some people complain
because they're different
and stand out too much.
I'm the opposite...I've
always been invisible.

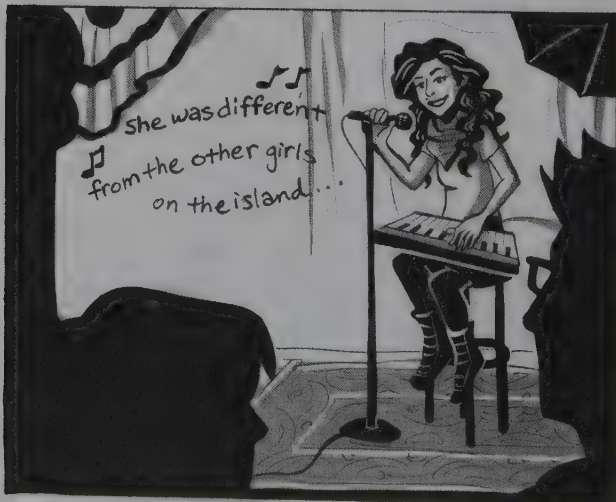


I don't mind.
People like
Jules can have
the spotlight.

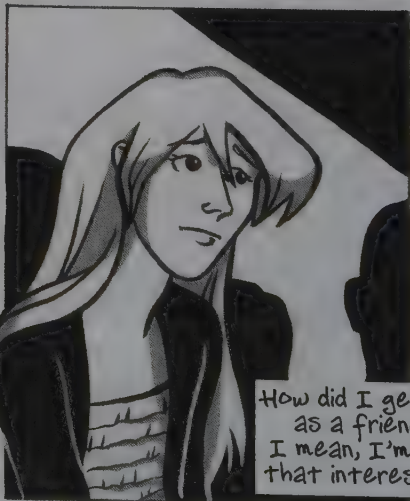


Thanks for
coming out,
everyone!

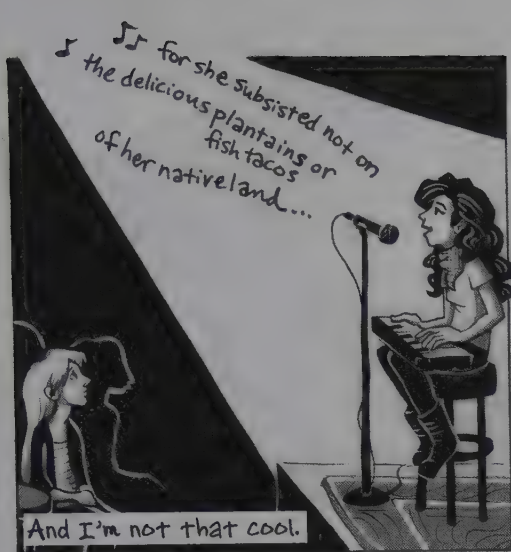
I'm Jules,
and my first song is
called "Puerto
Rican Robot."



She was different
from the other girls
on the island...



How did I get here
as a friend?
I mean, I'm not
that interesting.





Paige, are you okay?



Yeah, I'm fine!



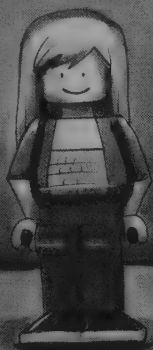
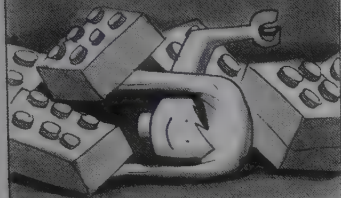
They're all better than me.

They're all better than me.

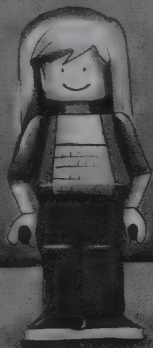
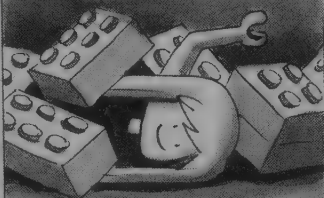
They're all better than me.



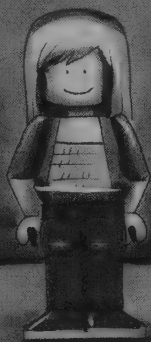
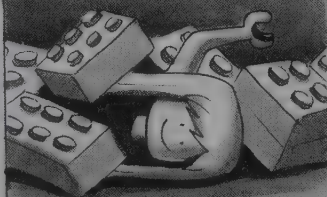
I can't keep being
this way! I need
to change.



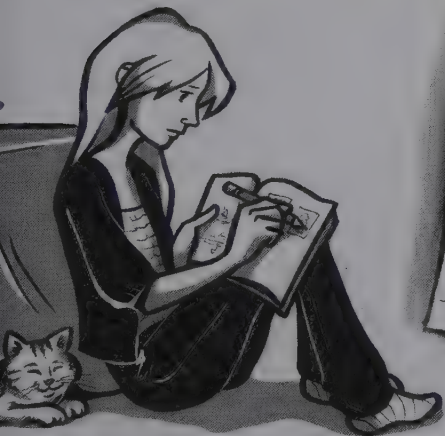
But to rebuild
something new, you
need to first take
apart the old...



So what parts do I
need to change?



What is it that I don't
like about myself?



1. I don't ask for help. I'm stubborn
and get frustrated easily.

2. I've always been such a
late bloomer. I feel
awkward, behind,
sheltered.

3. My body... I hate how I'm so pale, and my legs, and I have Jane Eyre Complex.*

4. I can't open up to people. It makes me feel weak and needy... a burden.

* Jane Eyre Complex: When a plain, ordinary girl hopes someone will notice her awesomeness and pluck her from obscurity.

5. I don't stand up for myself. I apologize for EVERYTHING, including my own existence.

6. I'm too self-absorbed. I'm always in my head, wrapped up in my own stuff.

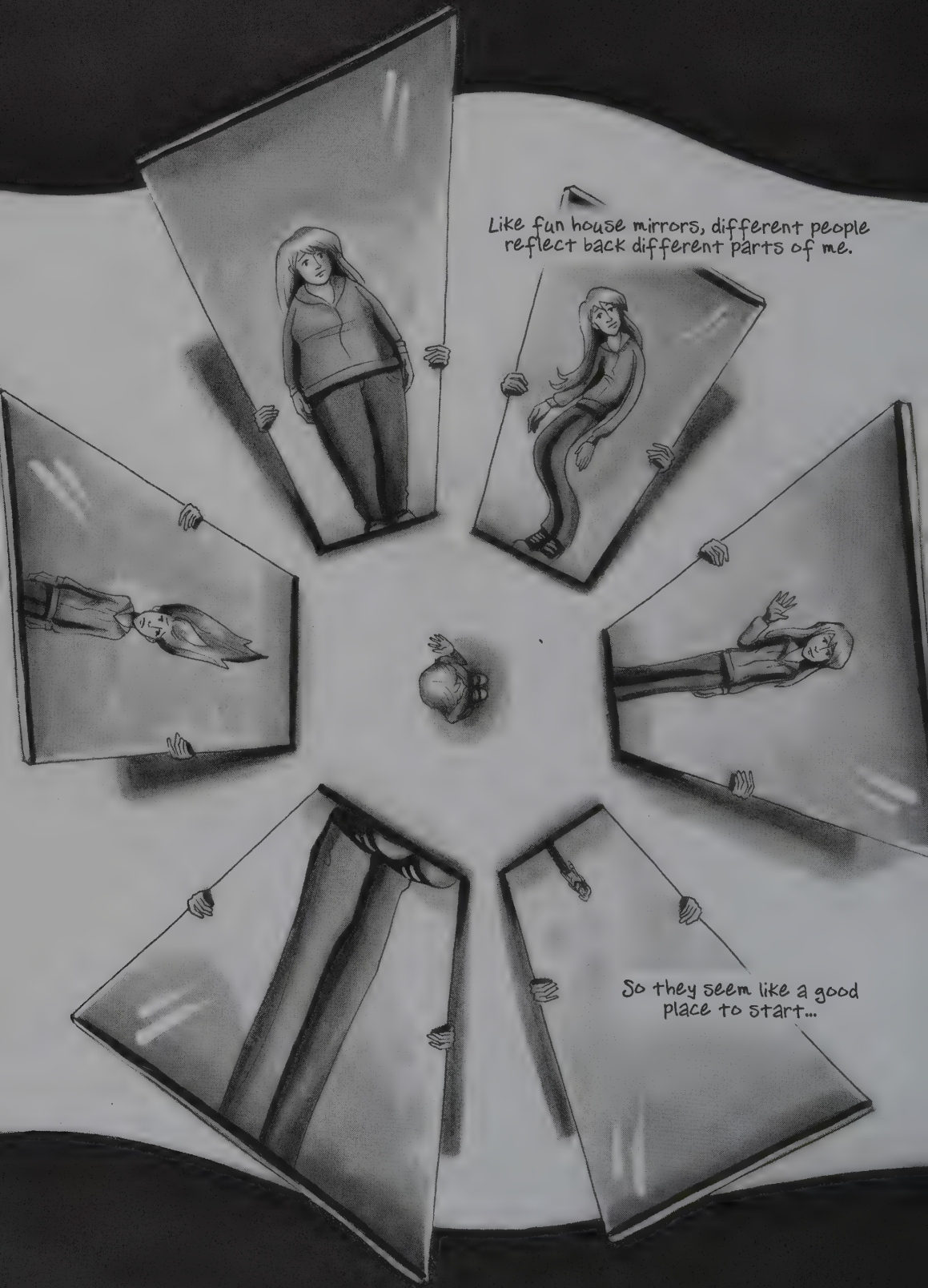


It's up to me to sculpt myself into who I want to be...



...and move some wires around.

Like fun house mirrors, different people
reflect back different parts of me.



So they seem like a good
place to start...

Mister Longo!*

Greetings, Miss Turner!

Sir, I require assistance with a matter of the utmost importance.

I was wondering if you could be so kind as to educate me on how to operate the contraption of the two-wheeled cycle?

1. I don't ask for help...

Wait, you mean **RIDE** A BIKE?!

Wow, you **DID** grow up in a bubble! How could you never learn?

I was terrified after Diana told me about a guy on a bike who she saw get hit by a car. When the tire ran over his head, it popped like a cherry.

...I'll be careful not to pop your cherry!

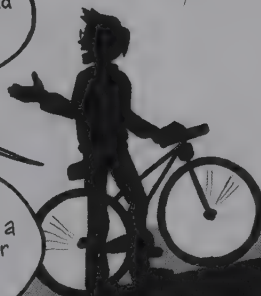
Of course I'll help you. And don't worry...

WHACK

I'm curious to see how a sixteen-year-old will tackle something most six-year-olds master.

2. I've always been such a late bloomer...

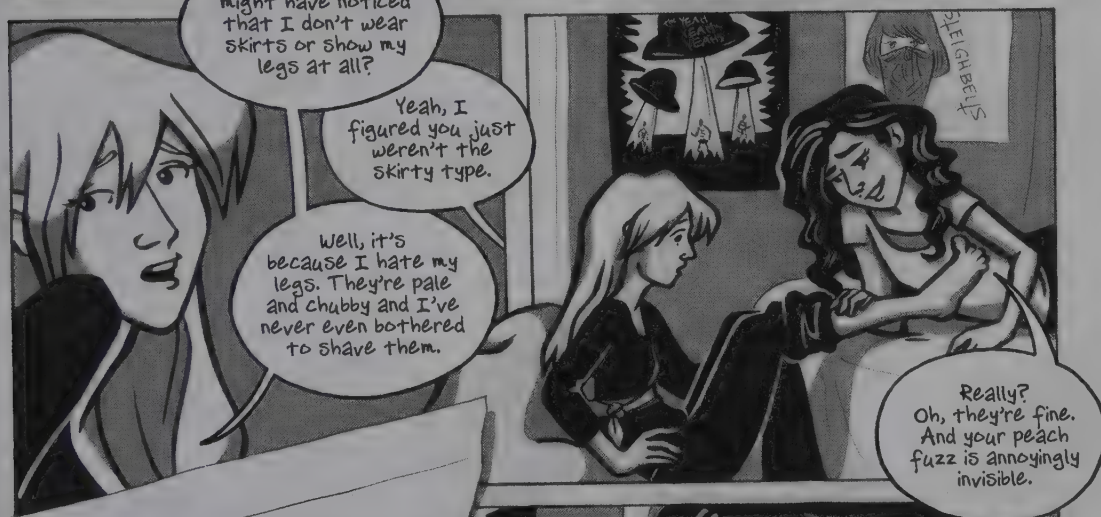
Yeah, but those six-year-olds have a much lower center of gravity...





Okay, so I can draw in a straight line...Why can't my legs follow suit?!







4. I can't open up to people...

What's with you, Paige? You have pensive face.

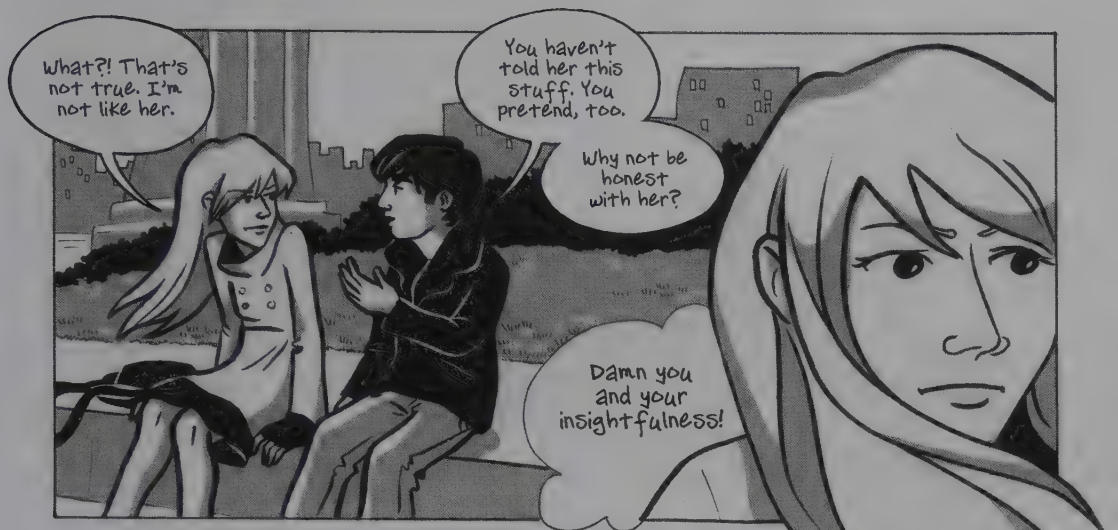
Oh, come on. Spit it out!

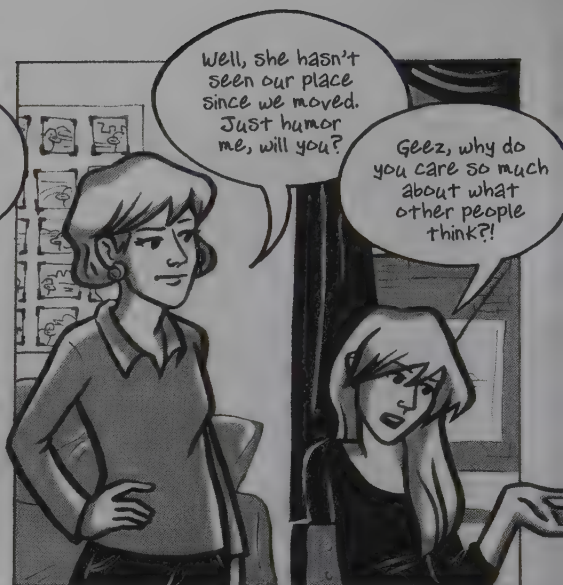
Nothing. I, well, I don't want to complain...

I'm mad at my mom.

She's so fake! Acting like everything is happy and perfect all the time. Like an actress in a play.

Sounds like you.







ACRRGG!! I want to YELL into my sketchbook!!

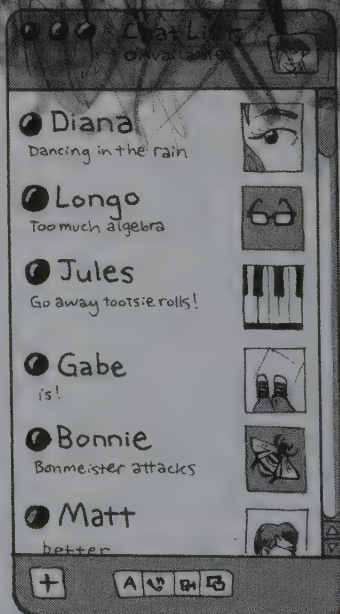
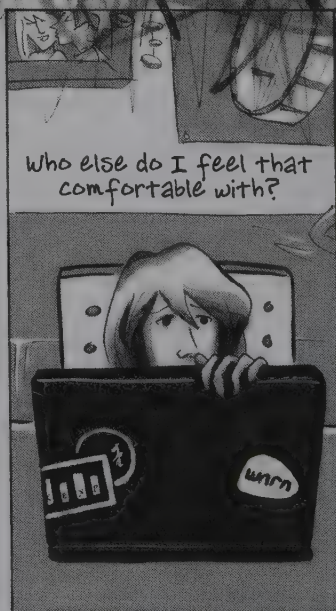
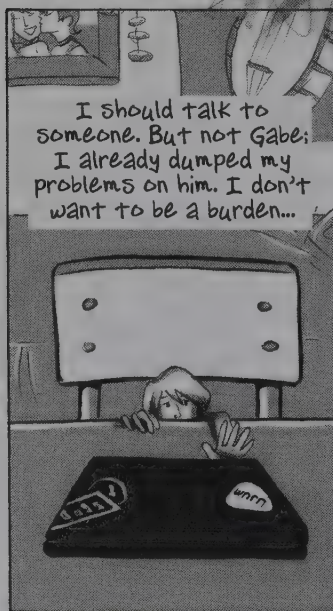
Mom, if you weren't

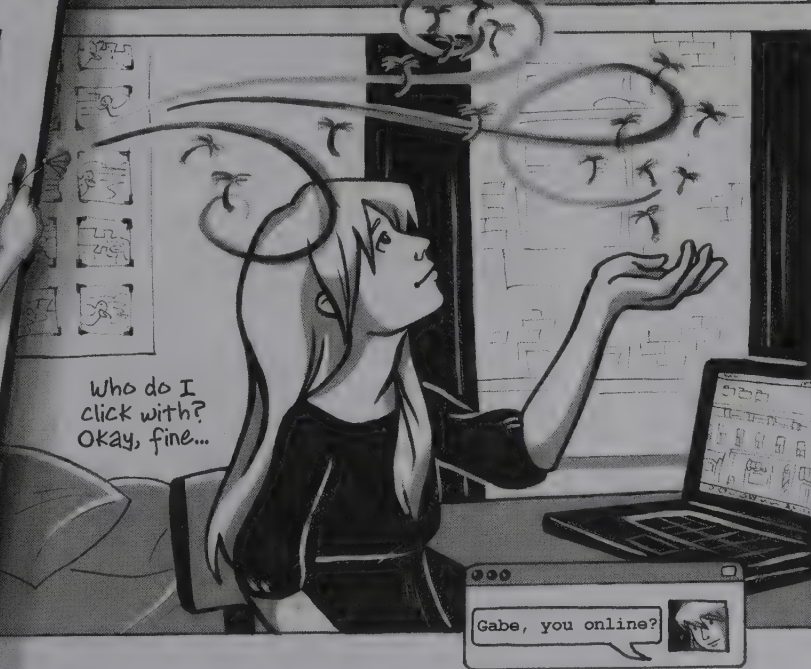
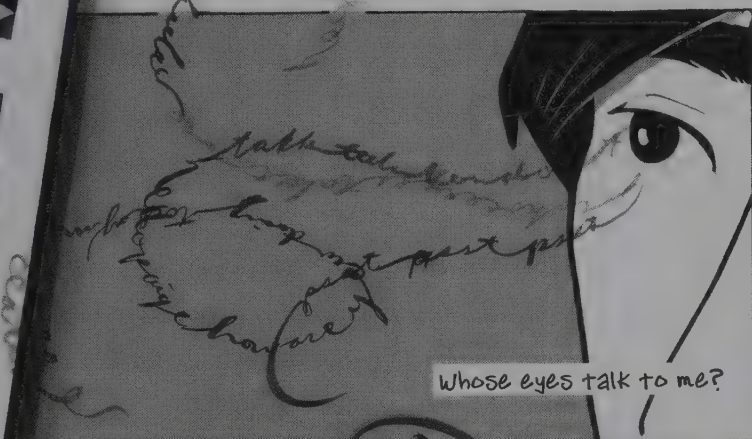
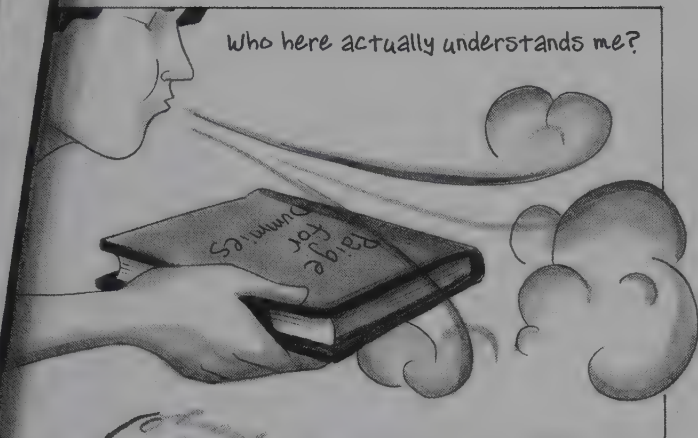
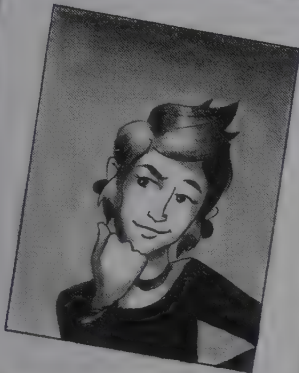
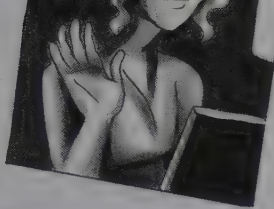
So INSECURE I wouldn't be...

Mom's final words lingered:
"Sometimes I wonder what
happened to the old Paige...
She was a better daughter."

Scribbling
makes
me
feel

Better





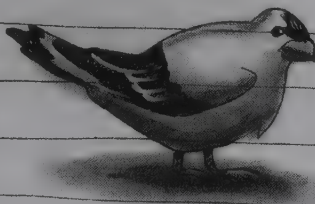


6. I'm too self-absorbed.
...Wrapped up in my own
stuff.

I've needed to let other
people into my head...and
somehow HE has already
managed to take root
without me even knowing.

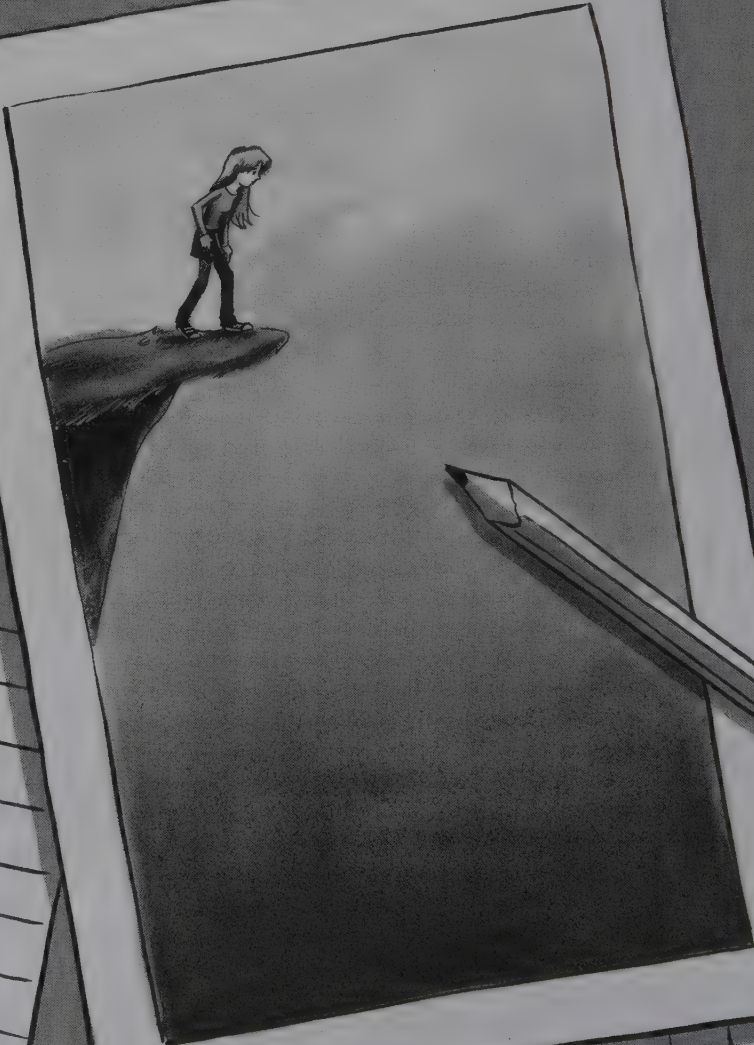
Rule #5

Figure out what
scares you and
DO IT!

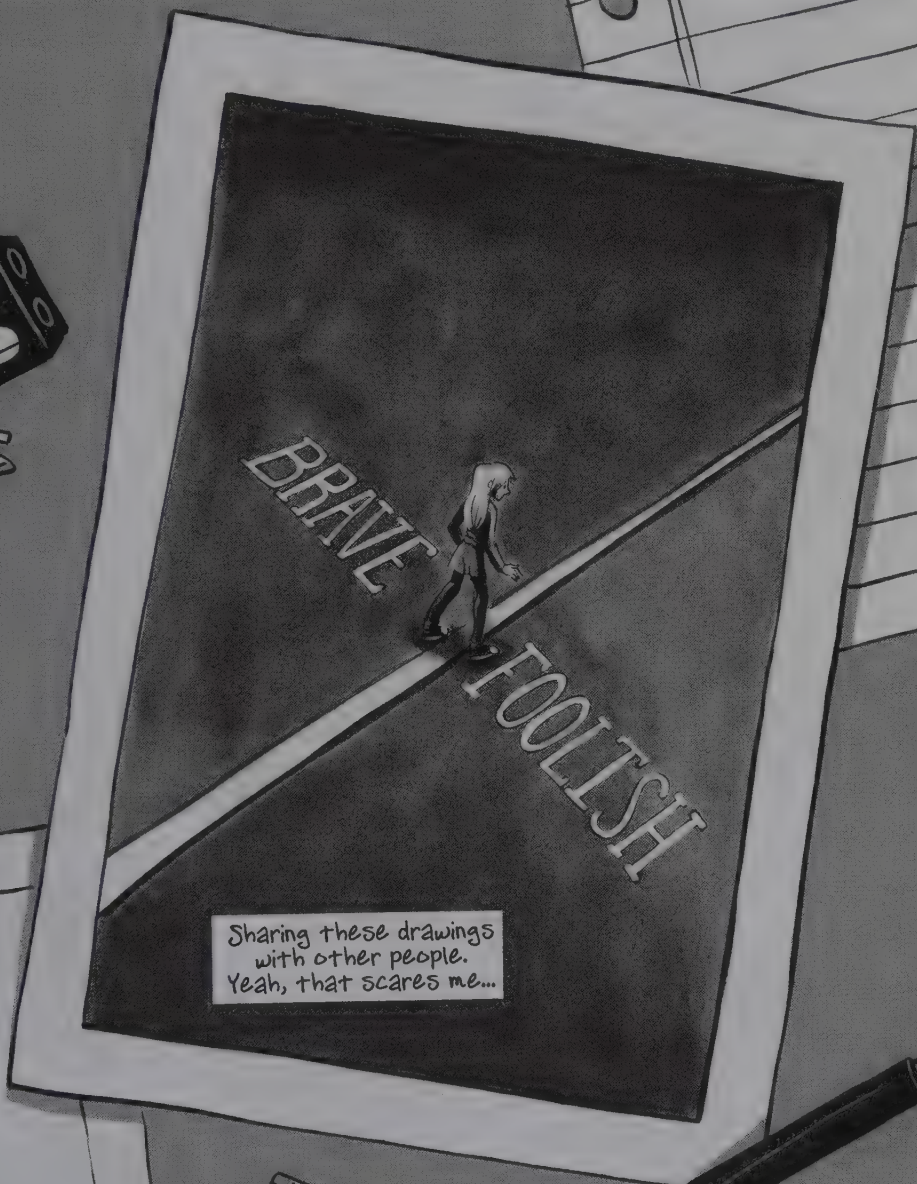
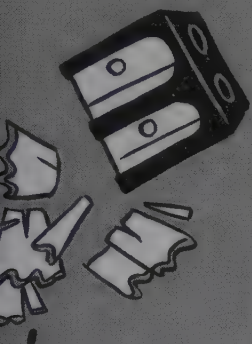


-March-

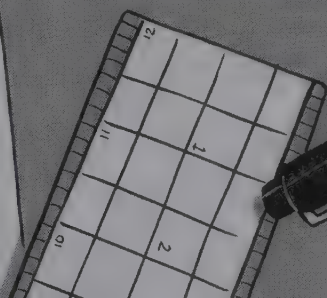
It's funny how risks on paper
spill over into real life.
Facing fears in my 2-D world
helps me in my 3-D world.

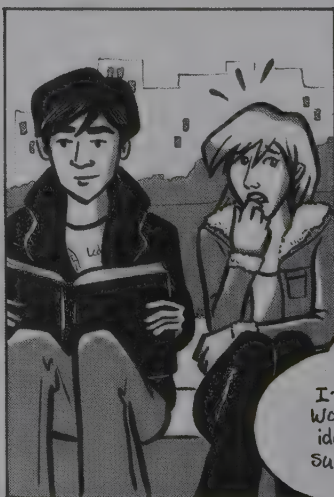
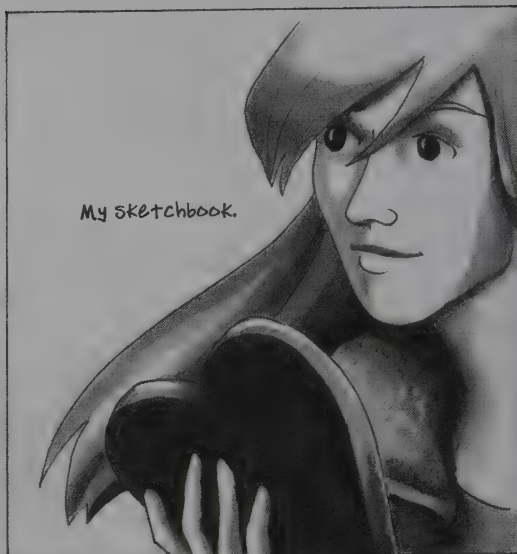


So what scares me?



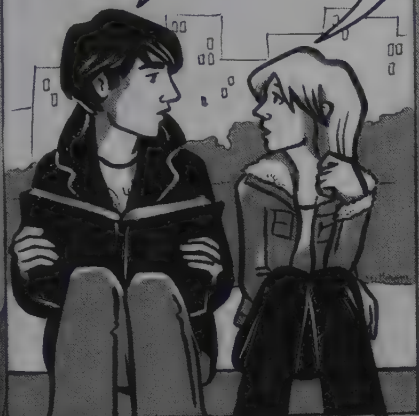
Sharing these drawings
with other people.
Yeah, that scares me...





Give yourself
some credit! I'm
trying to give you a
compliment.

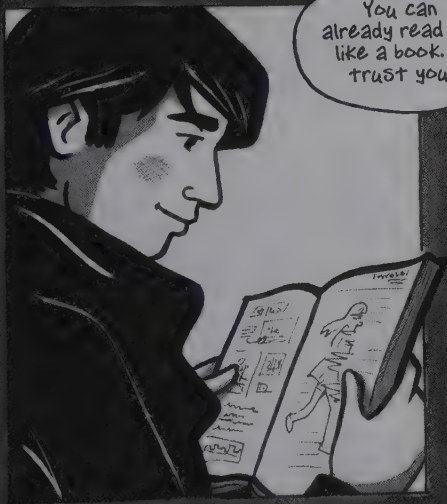
It's just, you're
the first person
I've showed it to.

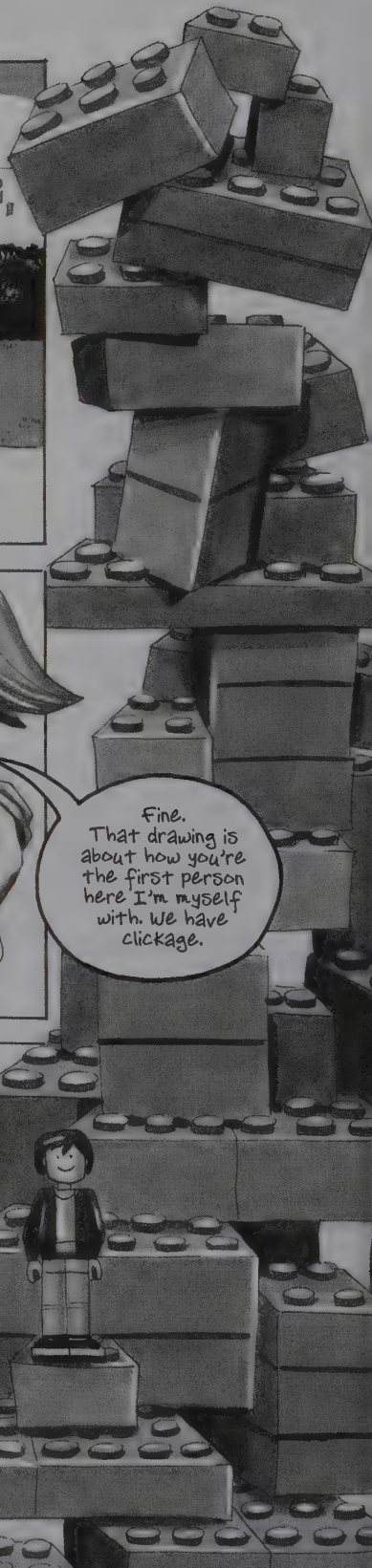
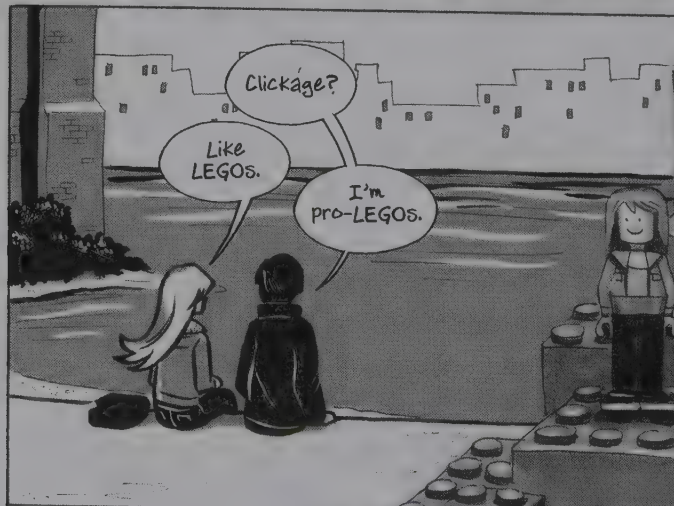
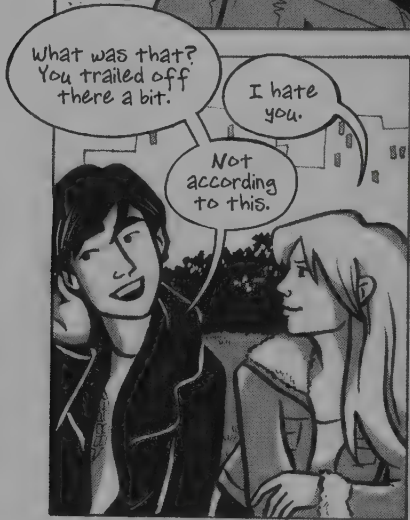
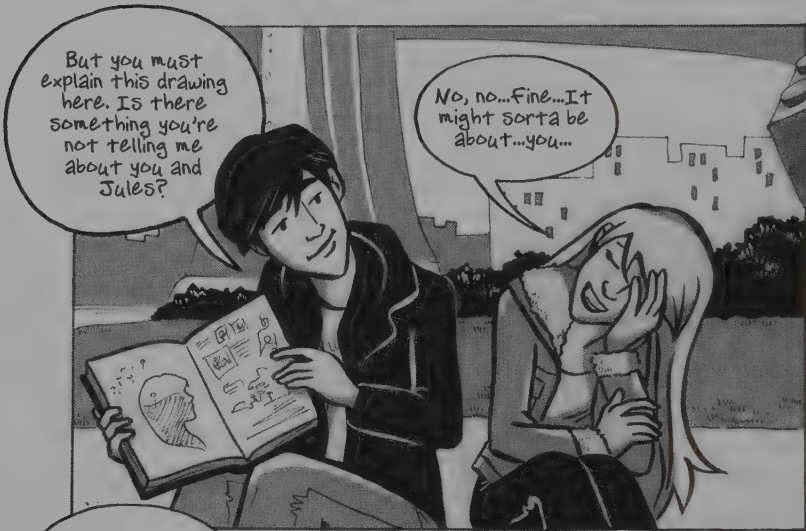


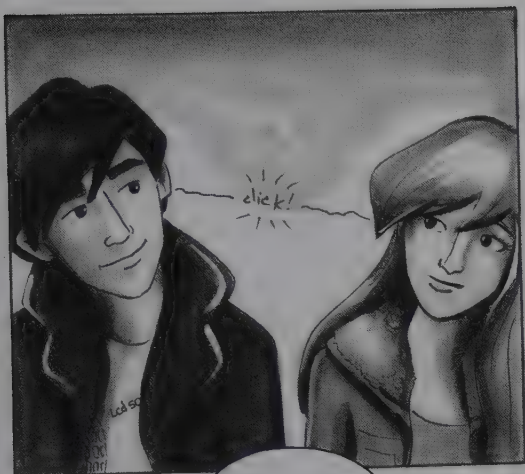
Really?
But, why
me?



You can
already read me
like a book. I
trust you.



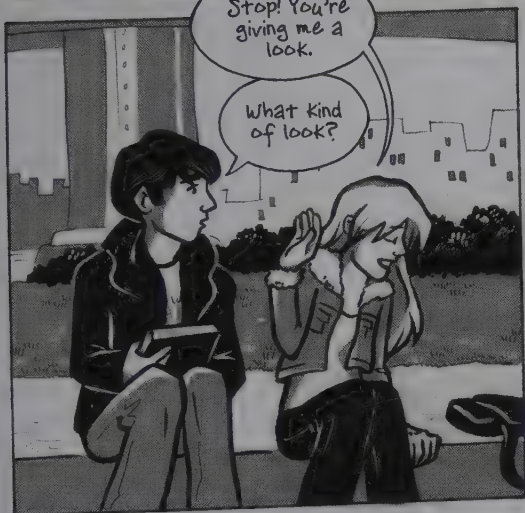




click!

Stop! You're giving me a look.

What kind of look?



Sometimes it's like you really ARE reading my face like a book. I feel... exposed.

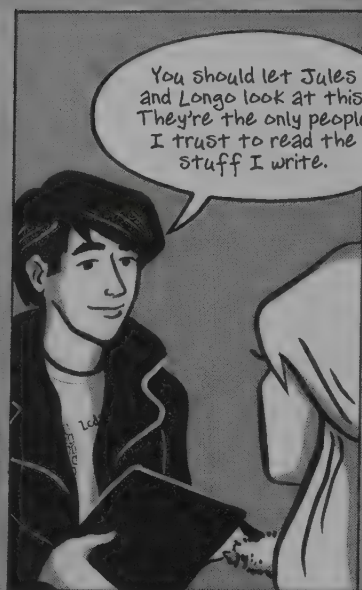
That's because I'm fluent in Paige.



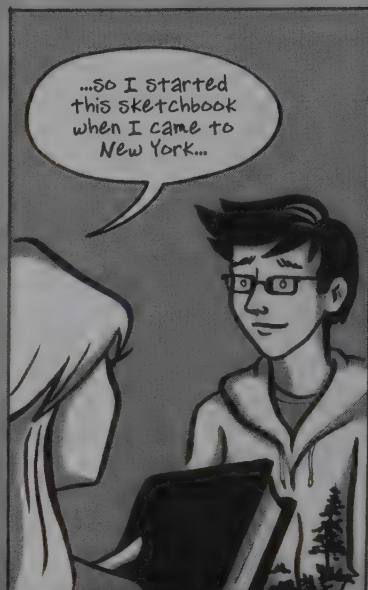
But you know what? I feel like you do the same thing to me. But I'm not DRAWING about it!

So... we're both exposed.

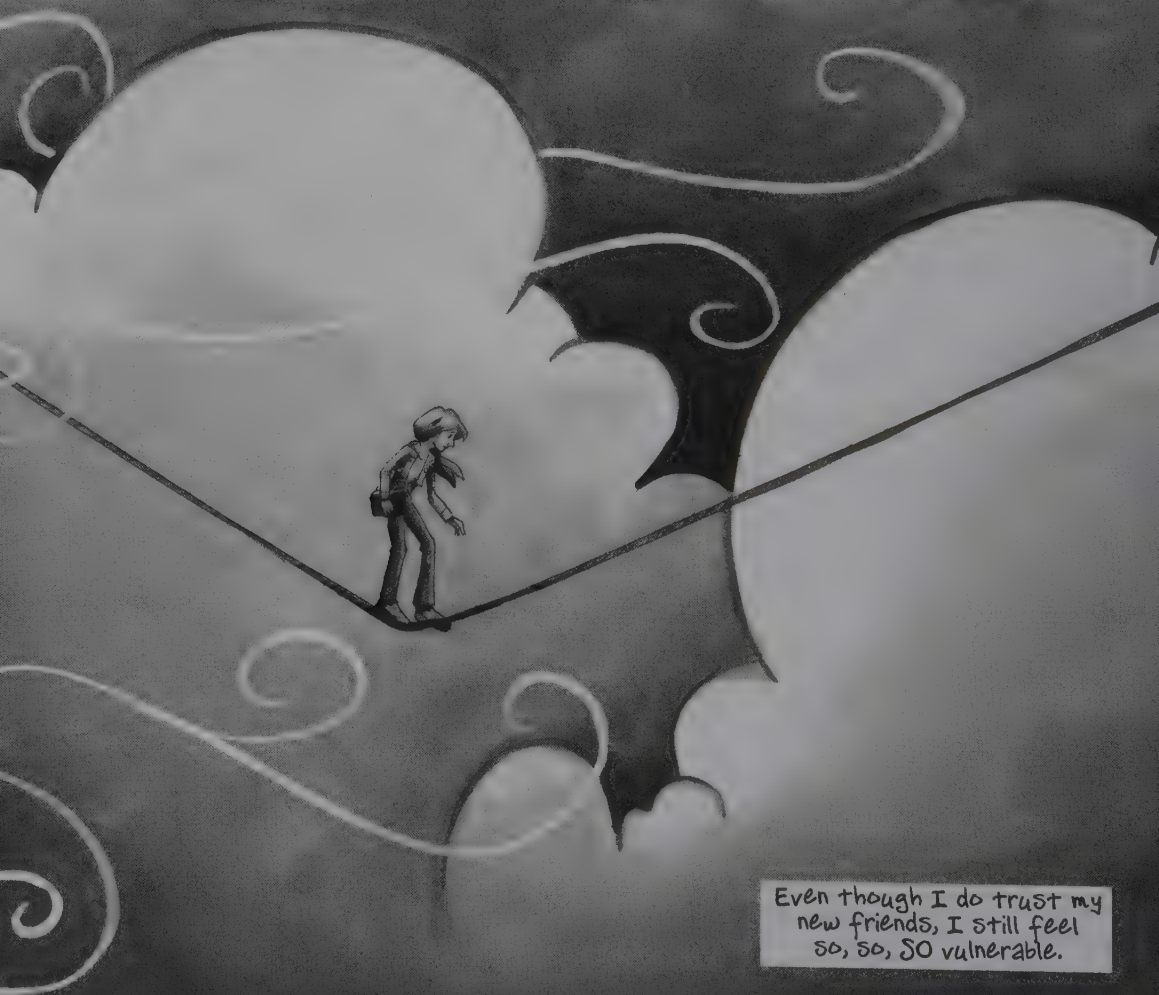
Muah-ha-ha...



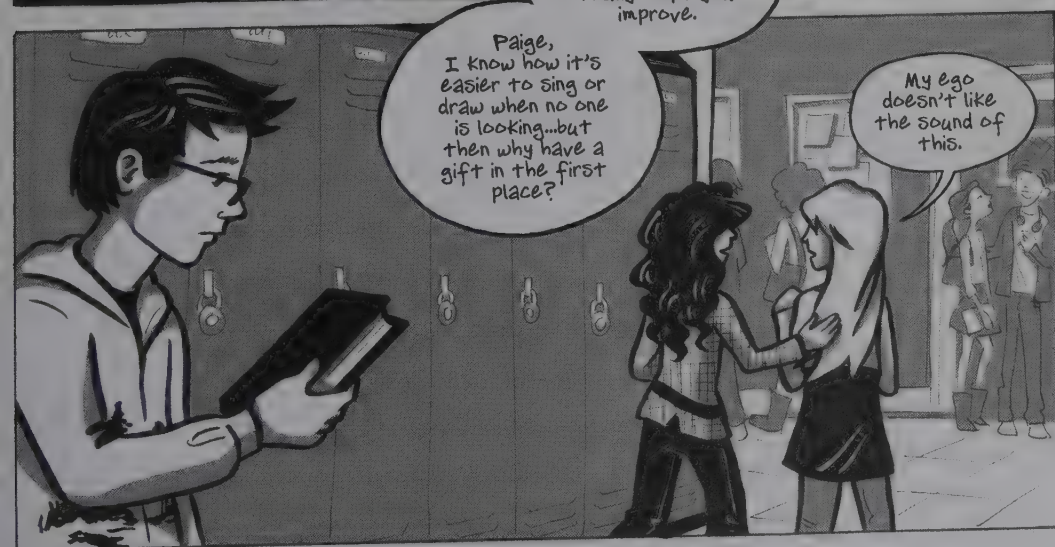
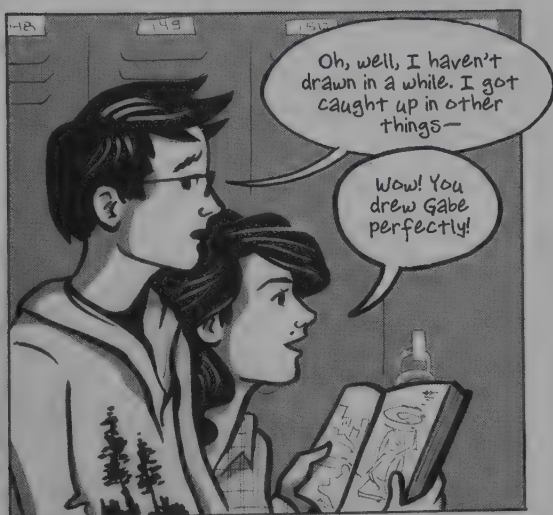
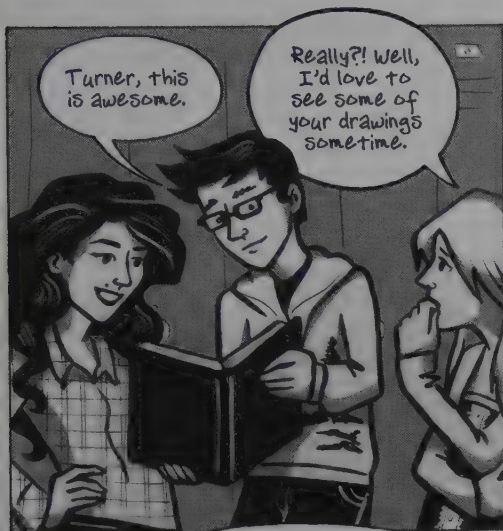
You should let Jules
and Longo look at this.
They're the only people
I trust to read the
stuff I write.



...so I started
this sketchbook
when I came to
New York...



Even though I do trust my
new friends, I still feel
so, so, SO vulnerable.



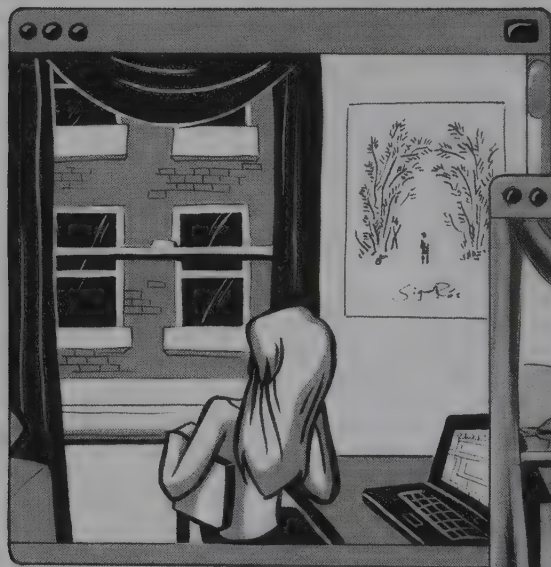
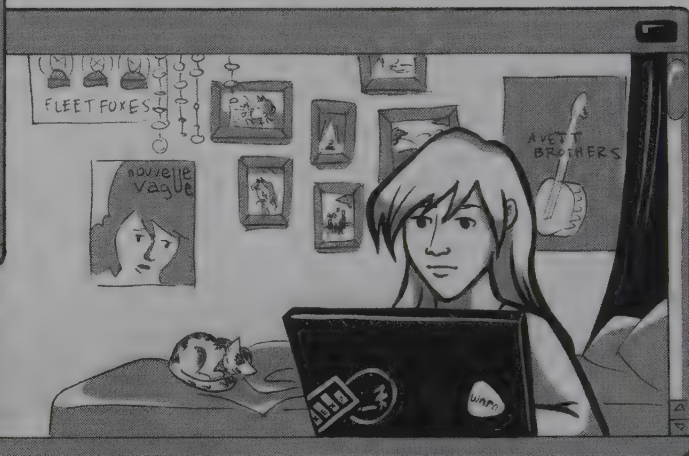
Clicker photosharing
Create profile:

UserName:

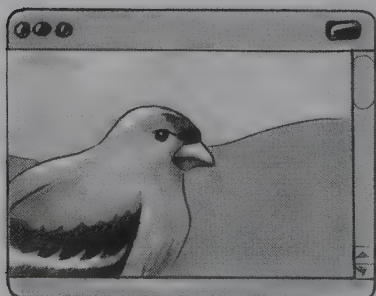
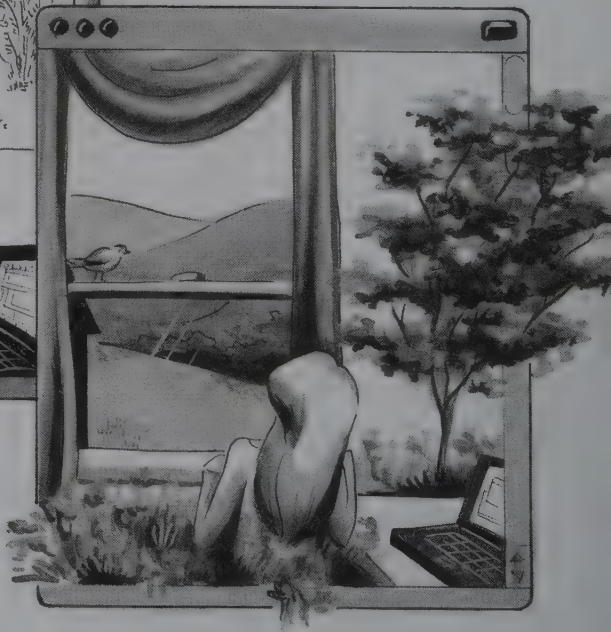
Password:

Email:

The thought of sharing my art
terrified me...so I did it.



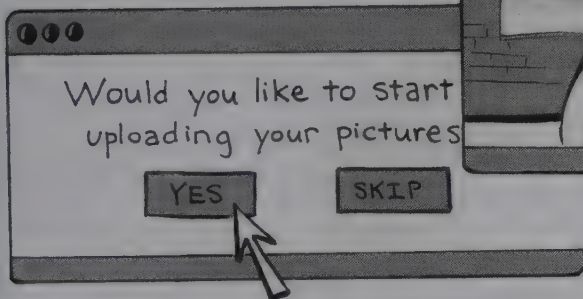
I need an anonymous name.
Maybe something from home?



That's it!



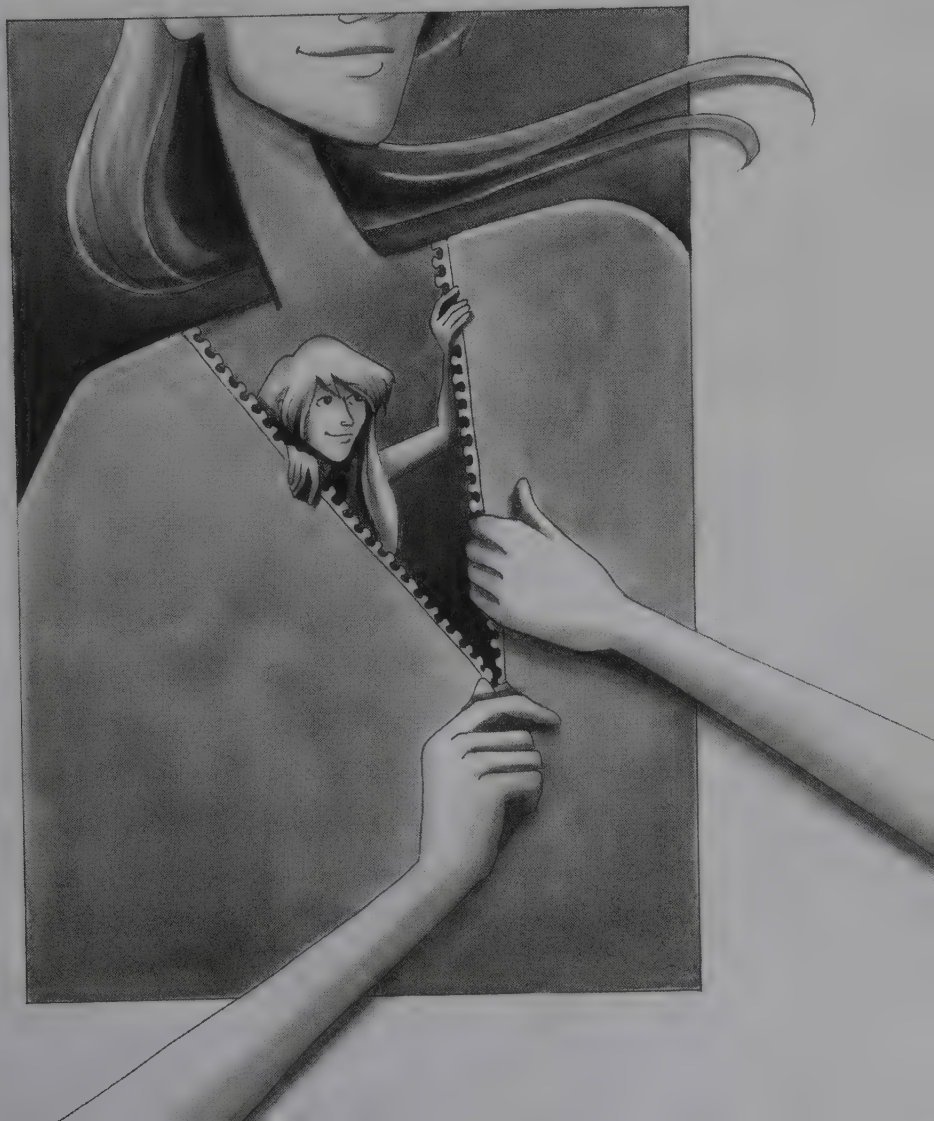
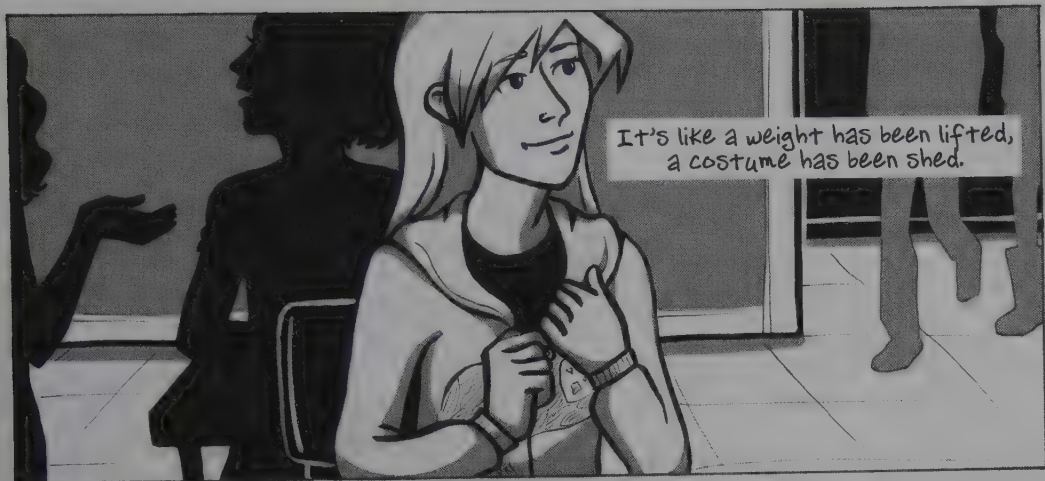
So on paper I can be who I want,
create the world I want.



my Pencil
Can Do
Anything!



I didn't realize that sharing my art would feel so...liberating!





Hold still!

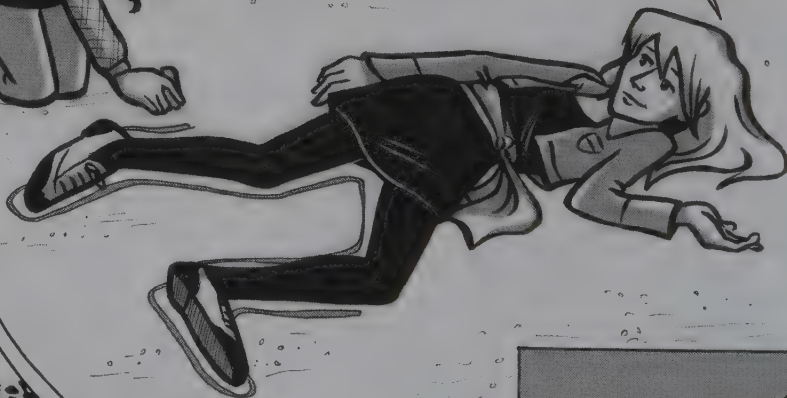


Aren't you done yet? This corpse is growing restless.



Almost done!
You know, Red,
this was a great
idea. We needed a
playdate.

Definitely!
You are the hopey
to my Maggie.
So...how did I die?



Impaled by a
unicorn. Terrible
way to go.

Little did
that unicorn know
that my spirit would
rise and seek
revenge!



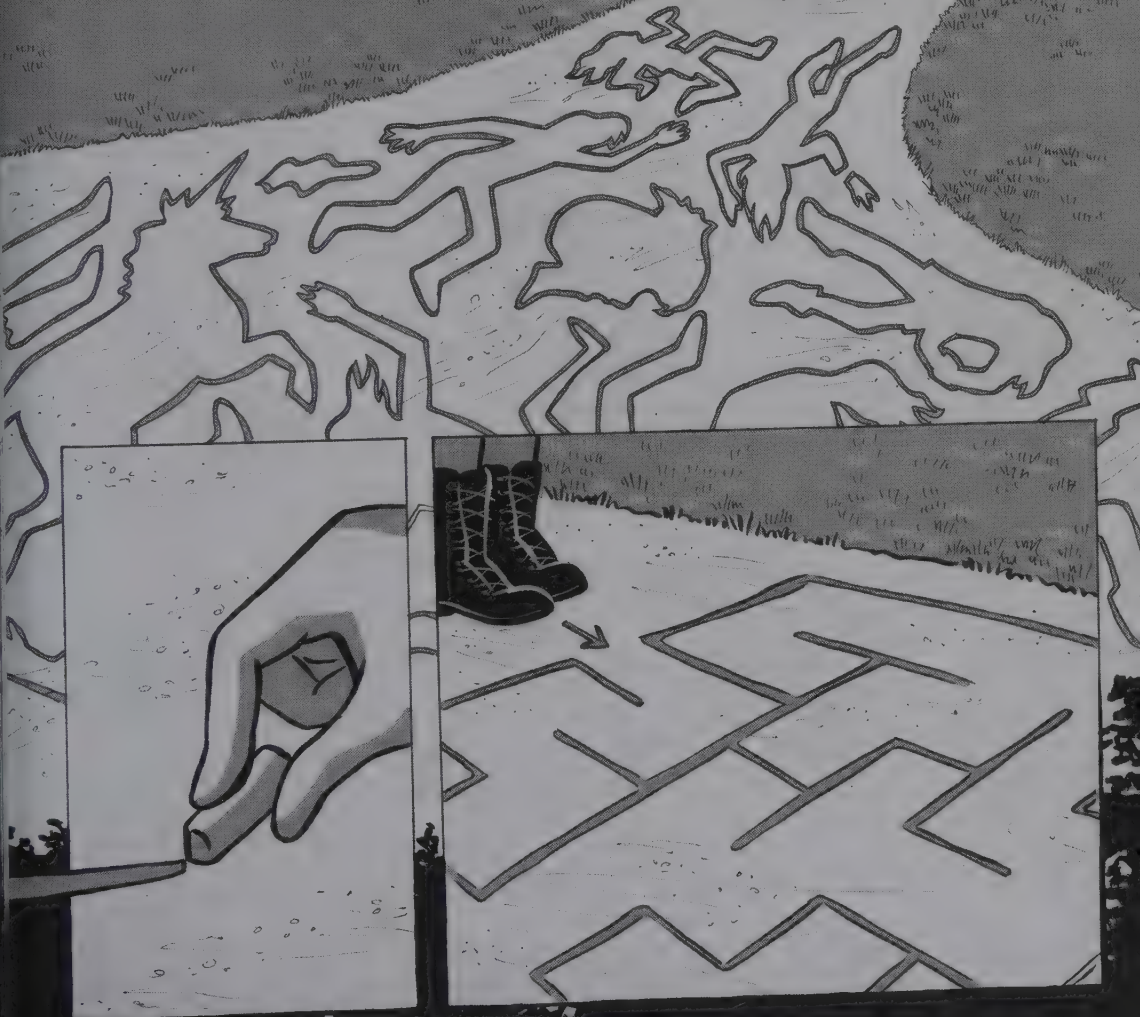
It looks like a dance party. But more ominous.

"Dawn of the Dead: The Musical!"

"So you think you can DIE!"
Ha, ha...

That unicorn had it coming.

Come on, there are lots of sidewalks in this park that need tending to.





in your life.

is the most important thing

this moment, THIS STEP,

What you are doing right now,

I think our
job here is done,
Agent Jules.

Brought to you
by the
Agents of
Whimsy

So, Paige...
let's get to it.
What is up with
you and Gabe?

It's **THAT**
obvious?!

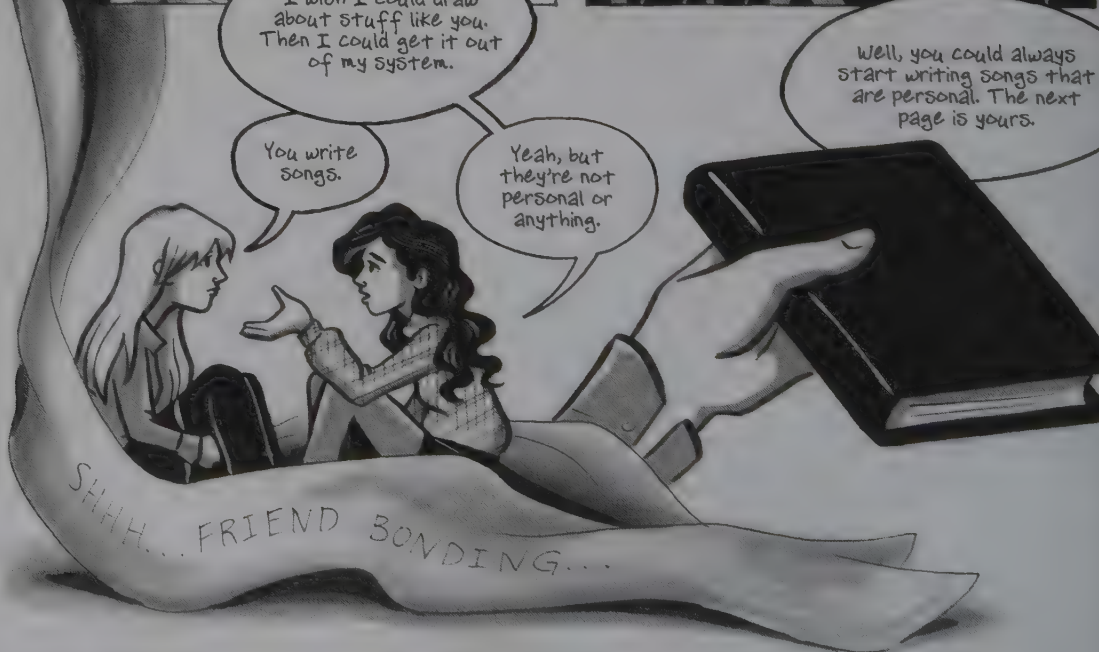
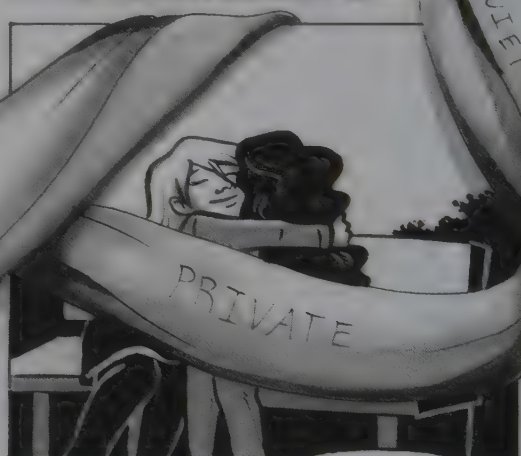
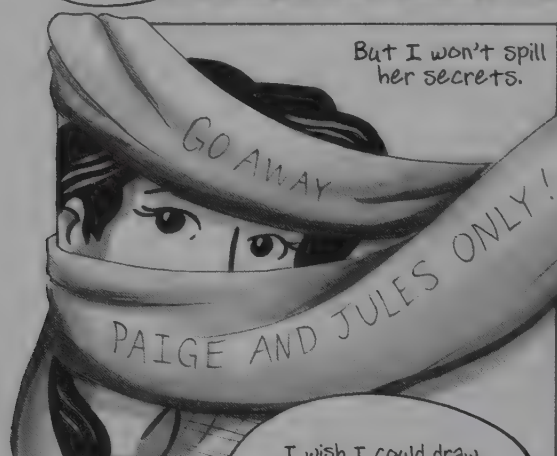
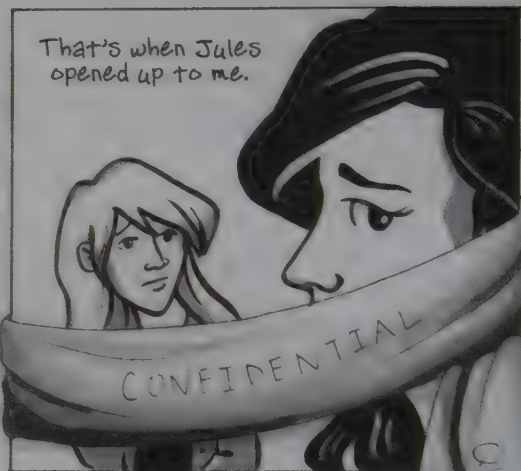
Yeah, there is
something there.
Something good. But
I know **NOTHING**
about guys.

Remember who
you're talking to? From
my limited experience
with men, all I can say is
that...it's a country I
don't want to
revisit.

But that's
not important.
Gabe is fabulous,
I think you—

Wait, what
happened,
Jules?





Jules tore this page out of my sketchbook

there was no other way to express her feelings, to draw

angry and swift using teeth and nails

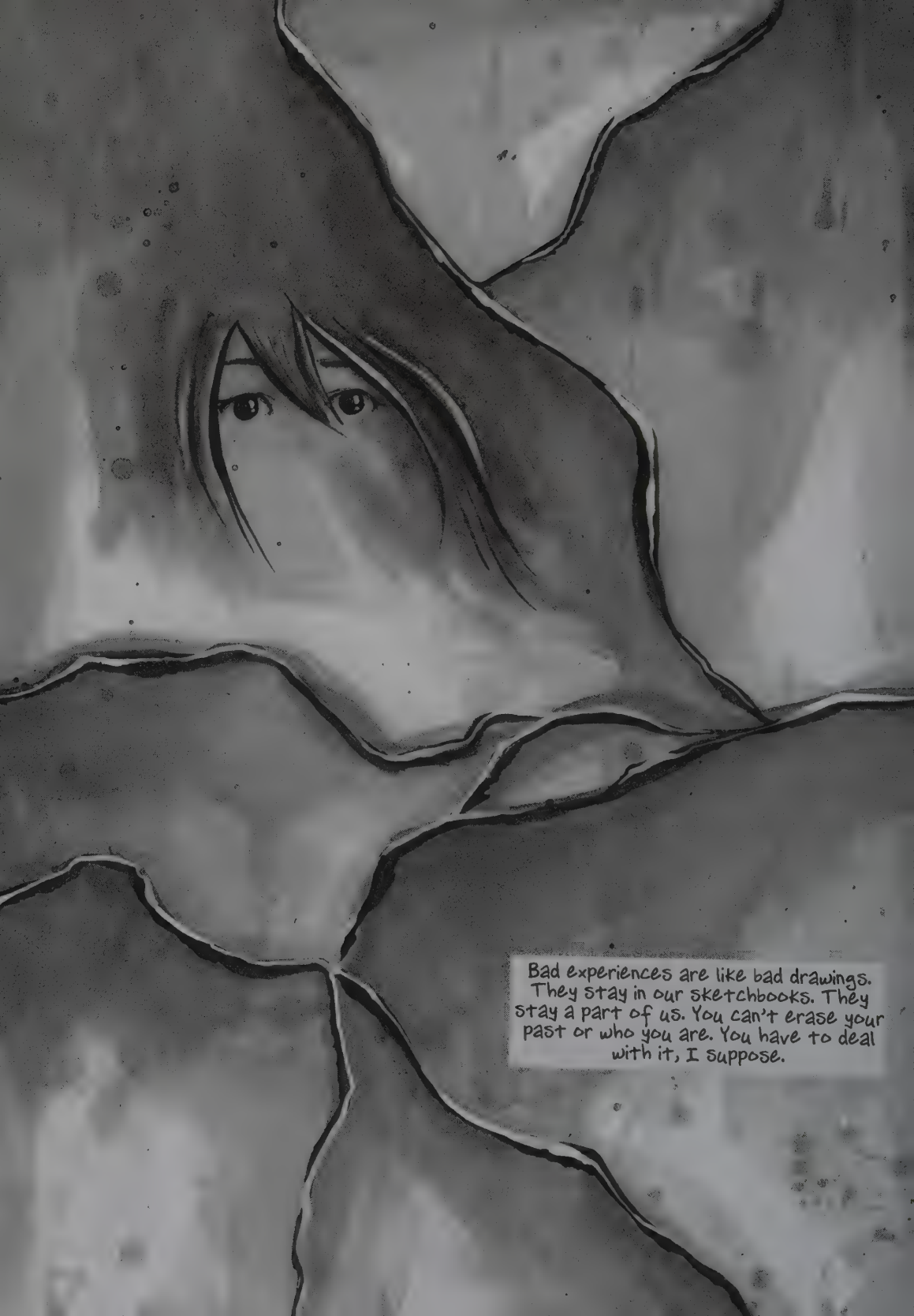
she felt better

the pieces of paper were scattered on the ground

together with glue

I collected the pieces and put them back

and repainted again



Bad experiences are like bad drawings.
They stay in our sketchbooks. They
stay a part of us. You can't erase your
past or who you are. You have to deal
with it, I suppose.

Rule #6

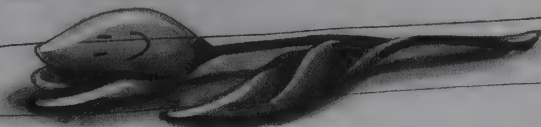
KISS:

Keep


It

Simple,

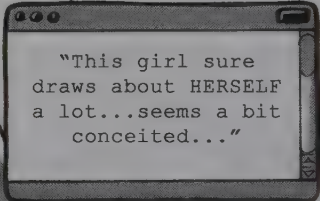
Stupid



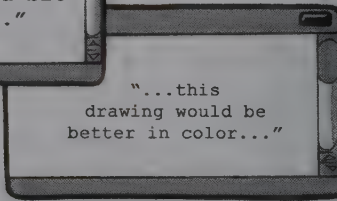
-April-



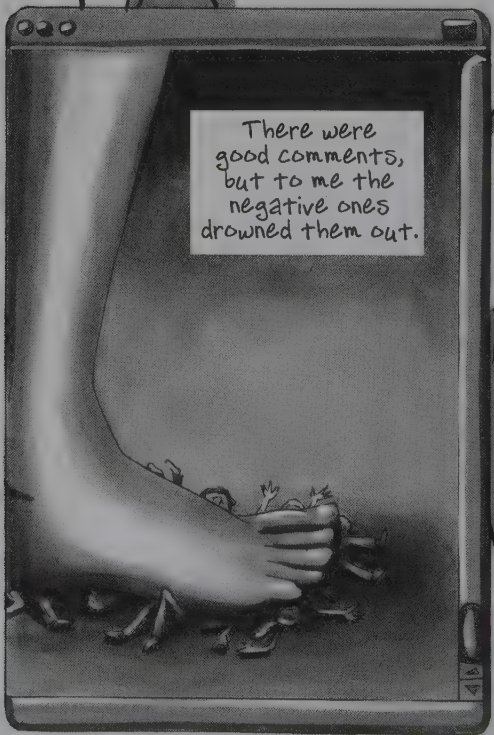
Today when I went
to post some new
drawings online, I
started reading the
comments people
have been making
about my stuff...



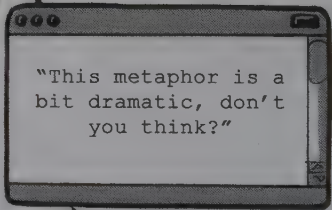
"This girl sure
draws about HERSELF
a lot...seems a bit
conceited..."



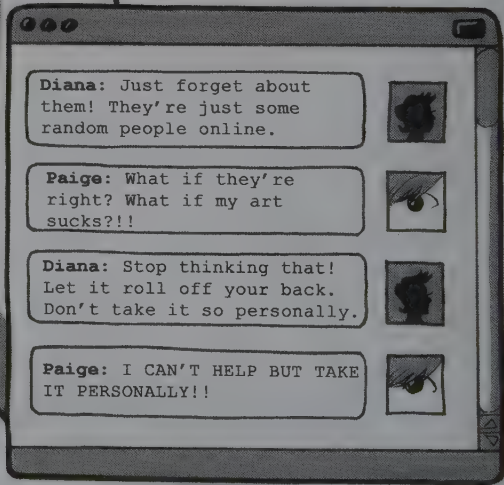
"...this
drawing would be
better in color..."



There were
good comments,
but to me the
negative ones
drowned them out.



"This metaphor is a
bit dramatic, don't
you think?"



Diana: Just forget about
them! They're just some
random people online.

Paige: What if they're
right? What if my art
sucks?!!

Diana: Stop thinking that!
Let it roll off your back.
Don't take it so personally.

Paige: I CAN'T HELP BUT TAKE
IT PERSONALLY!!

Why did I even put
my art out there
in the first place?!
I feel so exposed!!



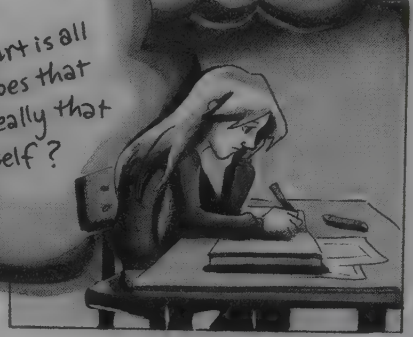
What if my art
really sucks and people are just
being polite when they say
they like it?

How dare I post
my art online
with real artists
when I'm not one?

What must other
people think
of me?

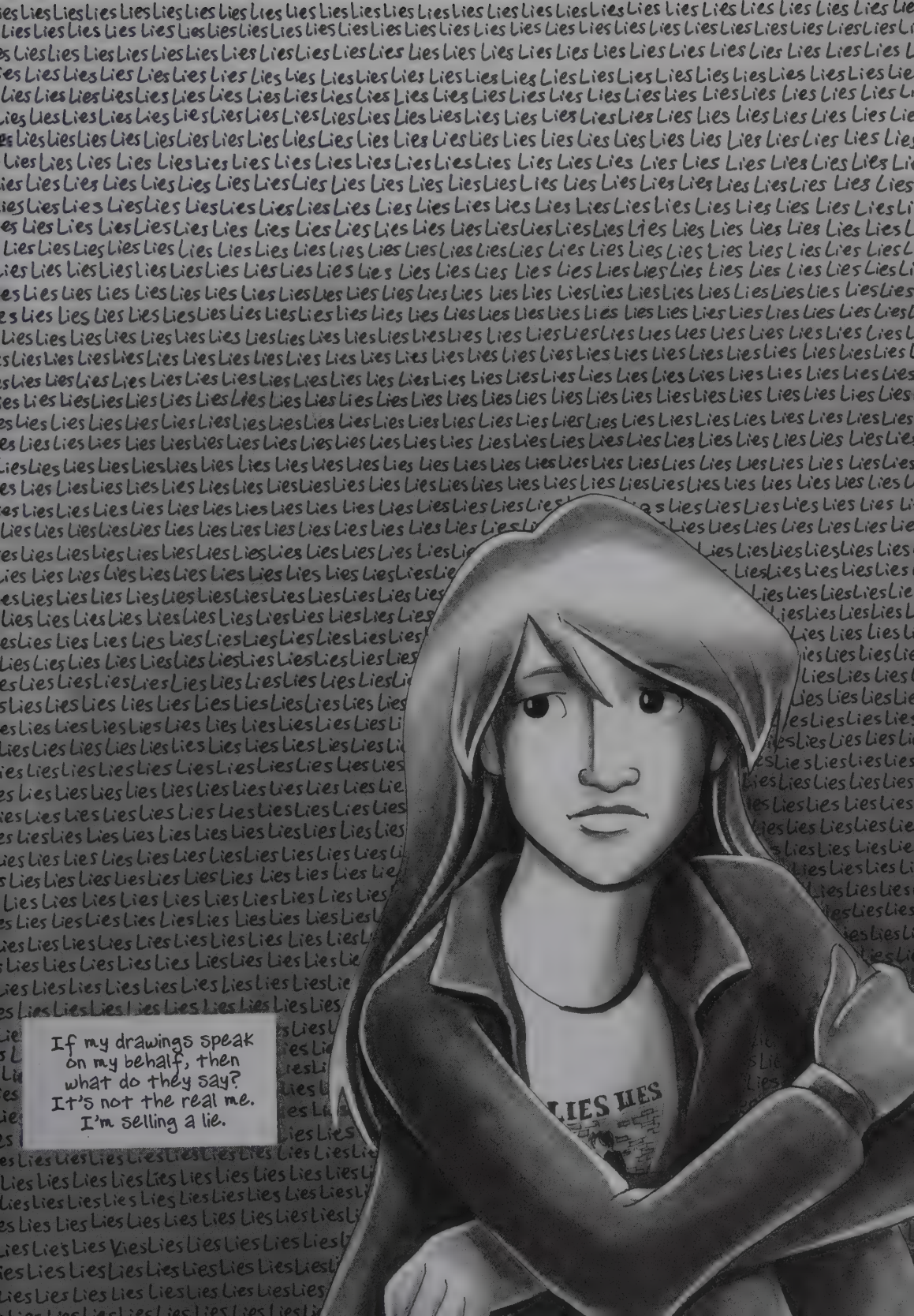
Why is my voice
important enough to
share? I don't have
anything special
to say!

Since my art is all
about me, does that
mean I am really that
full of myself?



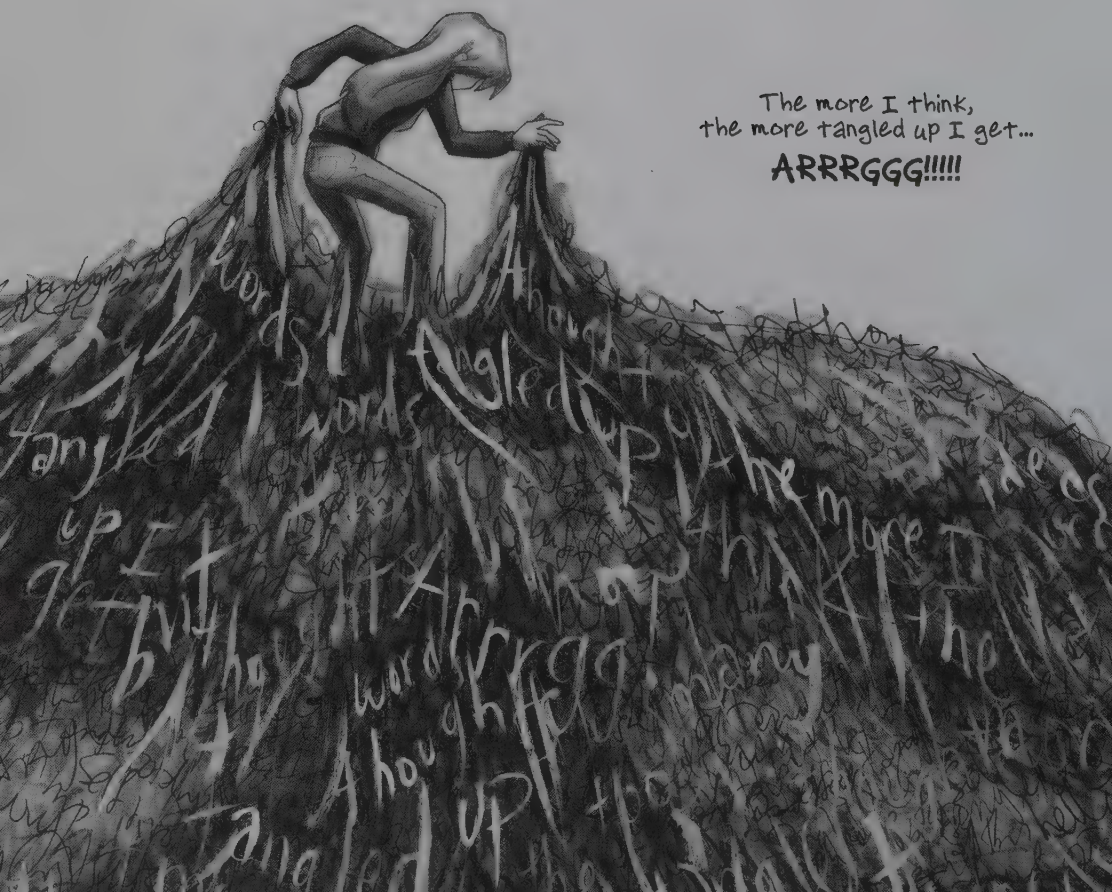
I AM totally self-absorbed.
Suddenly this seems obvious.





If my drawings speak
on my behalf, then
what do they say?
It's not the real me.
I'm selling a lie.

I always do this. I make things more complicated than they really are.



The more I think,
the more tangled up I get...

ARRRGGG!!!!



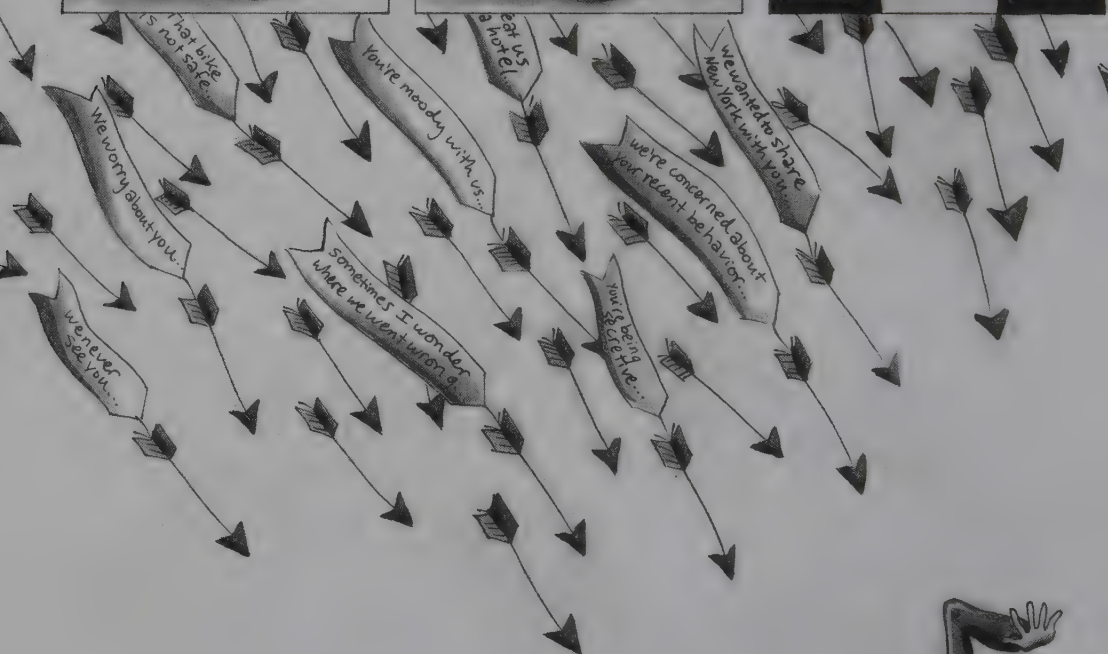
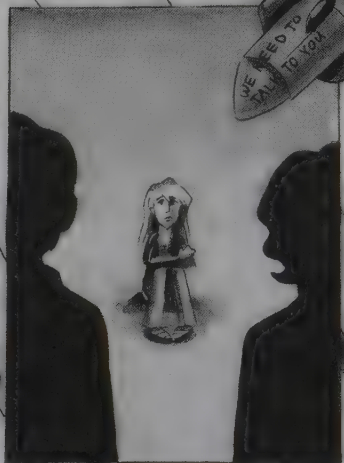
And I didn't draw for a week.



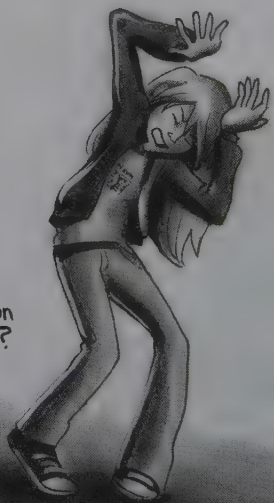
I was already
feeling awful.



And then
my parents
cornered me.



How can I convince
them that deep down
I'm the same Paige?



I decided to
throw myself
a pity party.

Great. So my art sucks.
AND the happier I am, the
more I disappoint my parents.
How can I trust myself
when no one else does?

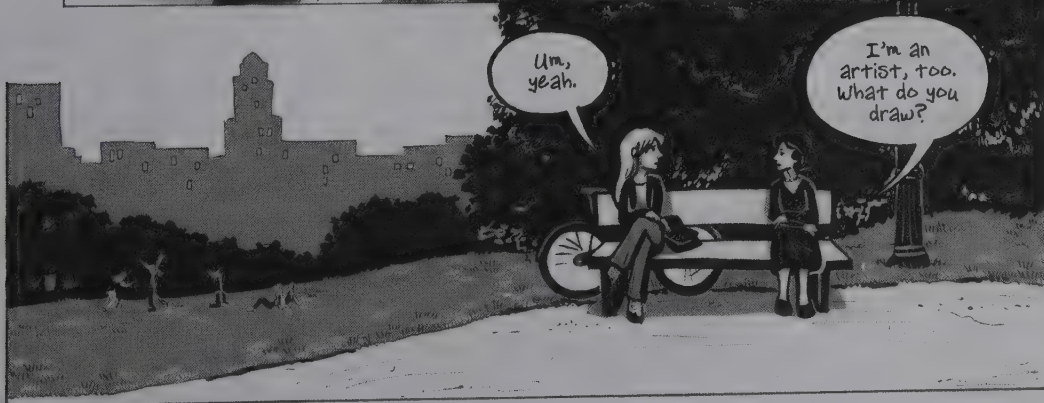


Excuse me,
is that a
sketchbook?



Um,
yeah.

I'm an
artist, too.
What do you
draw?



She reminds me of...


I, well...
here, you can
look at it if you
want.

You, um, don't
have to go
through the
whole thing...


Young lady,
you are quite
talented.

I appreciate how
honest you are,
because most people
are too scared to
tell the truth about
themselves.

You have
some guts.

A black and white illustration of a person with a ponytail standing in a sea of paper strips, holding a scroll. The person is looking down at the scroll. The paper strips are everywhere, some floating in the air and some on the ground. The strips have the word 'truth' written on them in a cursive script. The person is wearing a dark jacket. The background is a light gray.

You are like
a dispenser
of truth.

A black and white illustration of a person with long hair looking at a drawing of themselves. The person is holding a book or a drawing. The drawing shows a person with long hair, similar to the person in the foreground. The person is looking at the drawing with a slight smile. The background is a light gray.

Okay, so maybe
I am self-absorbed.
But who isn't?! When
someone looks at one
of my drawings, it
reflects back THEM.
Not me.



I think I was born with my eyes facing the wrong way.
Because they're always looking back into my head rather than looking out.

If I can tap into
something inside me,
then I should...right??
I shouldn't apologize.



To art or not to art?
I have an idea who else
understands this
dilemma...



Paige: Hi! :-)



Longo: Hey there, Turner!



Paige: Hey, you used to draw a lot, right?



Longo: Yeah, I used to be quite the cartoonist.



Paige: Soooo why don't you draw anymore?



Paige: And don't give me that "stuff came up" crap.



Longo: Okay, fine! So last year I applied to a special summer program thing being taught by one of my IDOLS.



Longo: I went in with my drawings, and he said I needed way more practice. My stuff was undeveloped. To try back next year. Etc.



Longo: I was CRUSHED because I was SO SURE I would get in. After that I decided to take a break from drawing, and I just have not gotten around to drawing anything since then.



Paige: That's terrible! :-(But it's been a long time. Why don't you try to get back into it?



Longo: I dunno, the longer I wait the harder it becomes. The pressure builds up. It's just easier to leave it in the past.



Paige: But do you miss it?



Longo: Yes.



Paige: What are you doing after school tomorrow?

(Support)



(This is a drawing Longo and I made TOGETHER!)



Paige, do you
mind if I write
something else?

Somewhere
between
darkness
and
wonder

...is
every
dream

Somewhere
between
breaking
and
broken

...there's
a song
to sing

Somewhere
between
nothing
and
something

...is
everything

Thanks! And
your portraits
are quite...
expressive. Yet,
simple.

That's
beautiful,
Gabe. Where is
it from?

Where?
Uh, me. I
wrote that.

Really? Wow,
you're quite the
wordsmith.

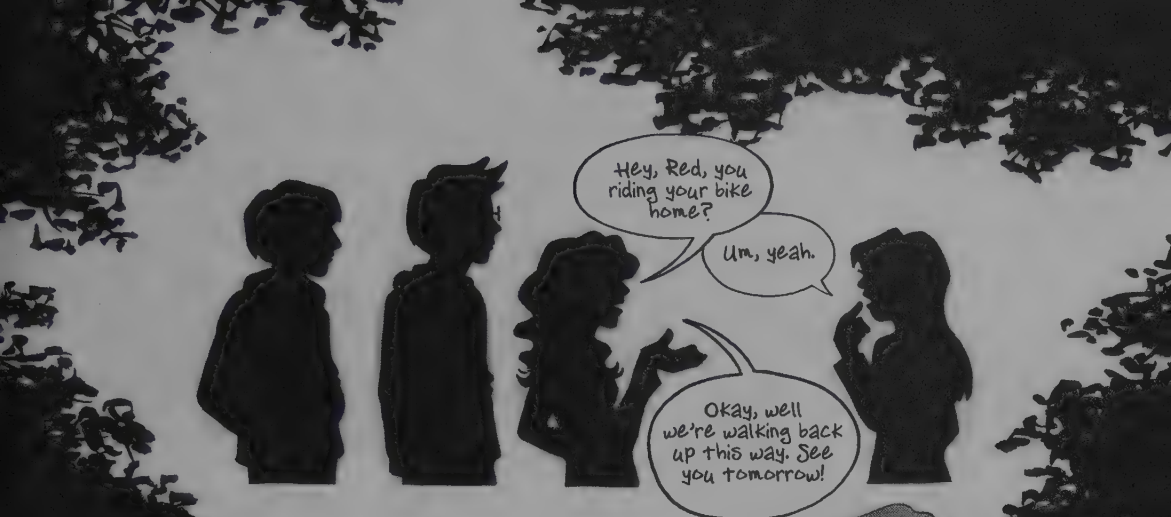


I learned that
lesson from my old
art teacher.

I'd make
something overly
complicated and she'd
write KISS on my paper:
Keep It Simple, Stupid.

And I think
we are simply
done!





Hey, Red, you riding your bike home?

Um, yeah.

Okay, well we're walking back up this way. See you tomorrow!

But wait... I don't want to go



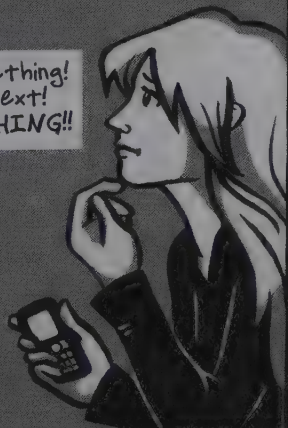
Ride safe, Turner!



Thanks...

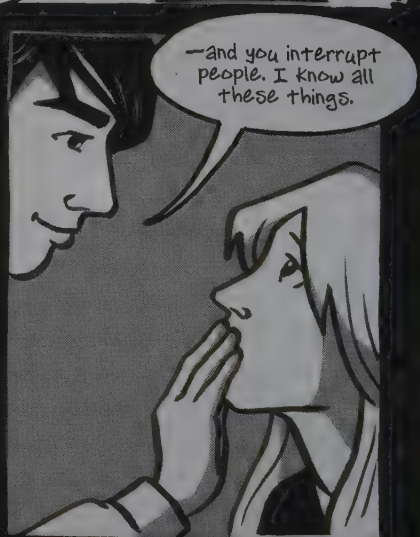
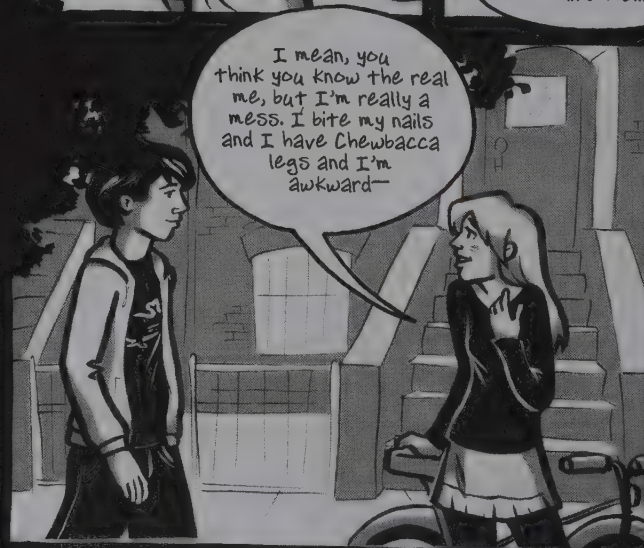
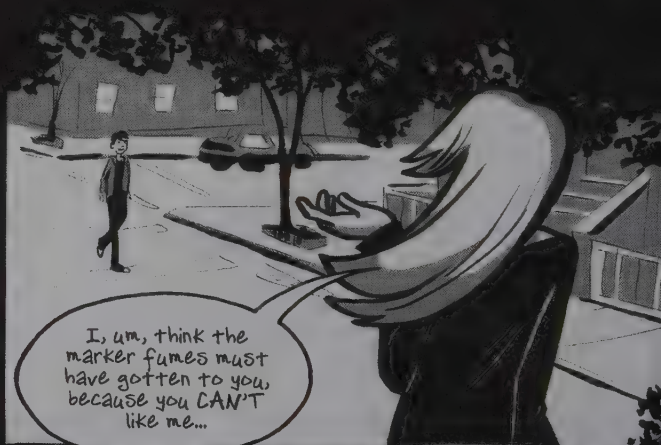
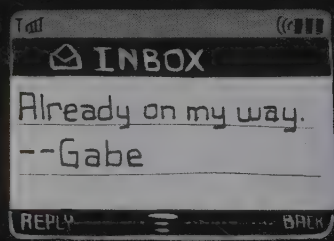
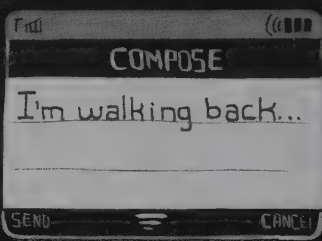
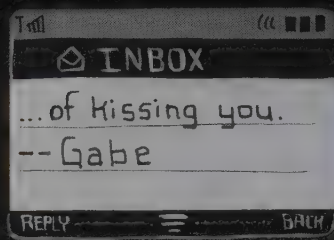
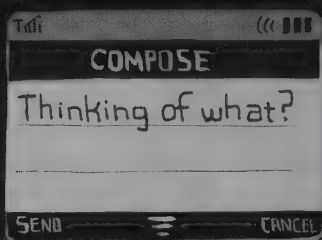
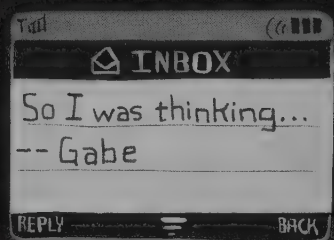


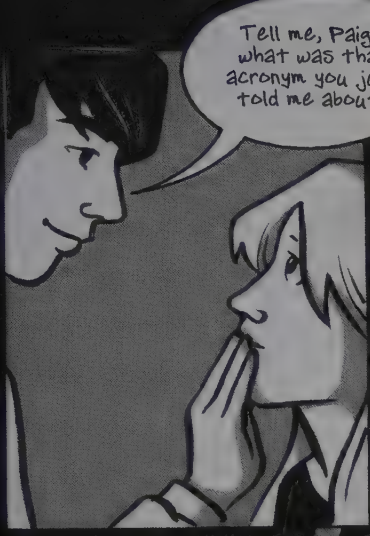
Do something!
Yell! Text!
SOMETHING!!




What would I say? "Gabe, come back!"?







Tell me, Paige,
what was that
acronym you just
told me about?



KISS. Keep
It Simple...



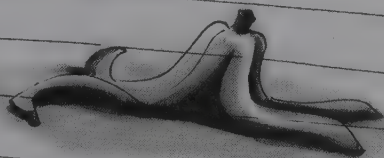
...Stupid.



My heart didn't even write a
farewell note...It was a goner.

Rule #7

Live a LOT to get better
material. Let yourself
feel everything.

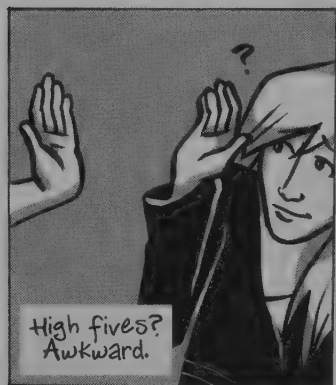


-may-



Besides sporadic hugging, my family isn't affectionate.

My parents even sleep in separate rooms. So I've always had trouble with physical contact.



High fives?
Awkward.

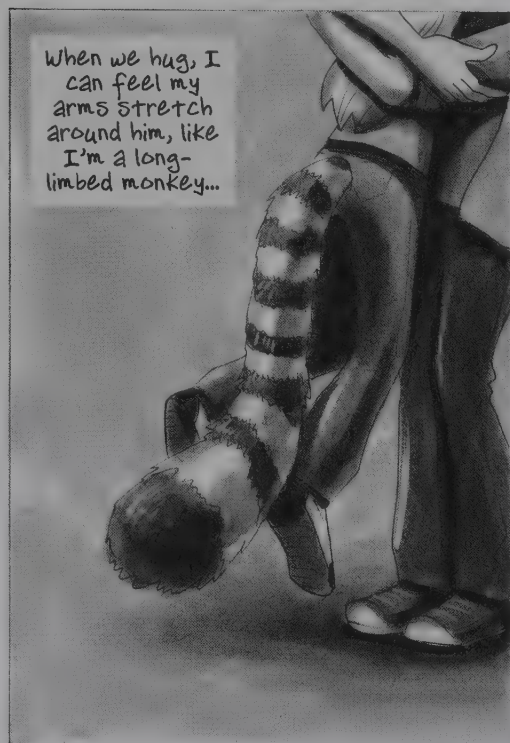


Hand-holding?
Unheard of.



You give
good hugs.

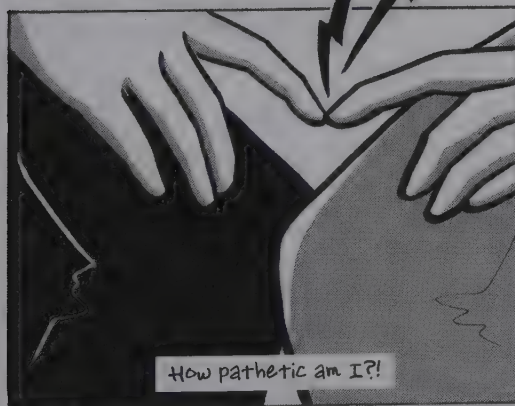
So it's weird
that Gabe doesn't
feel weird.



When we hug, I
can feel my
arms stretch
around him, like
I'm a long-
limbed monkey...



With my mom,
I'm more like a
startled deer.
But maybe that's
because things
with her are still
frosty.





What?

You two.
I knew it.

I KNEW IT!!

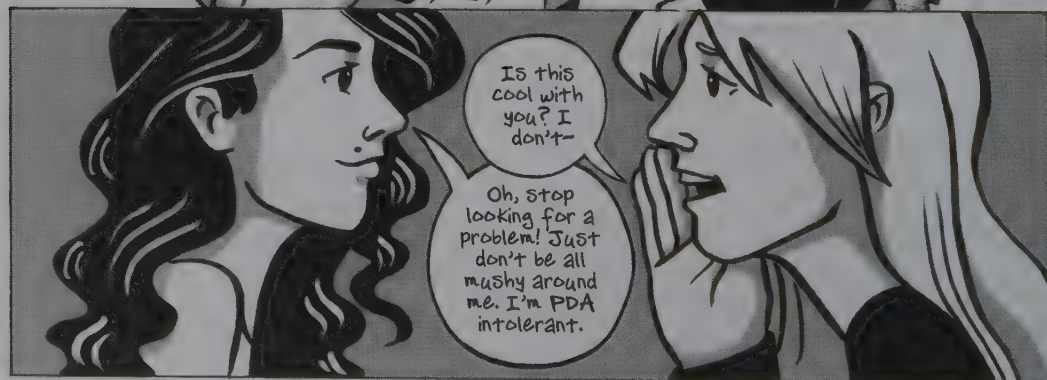


Them?! I
think I just
vomited in my
mouth...

Your cheeks
give everything
away! When were
you gonna tell
me, you vixen
you?

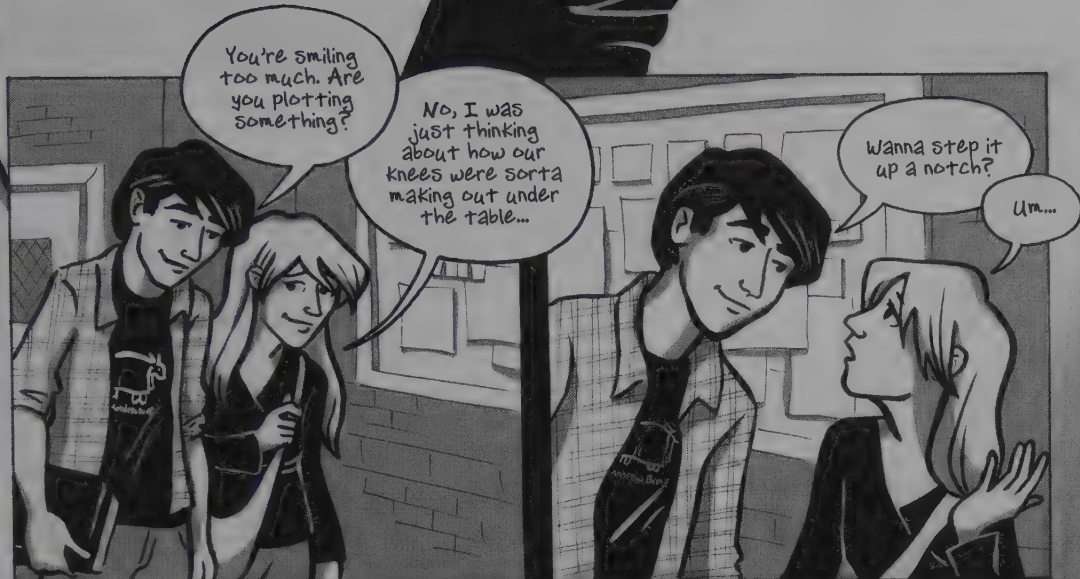
giggle

Very
funny...



Is this
cool with
you? I don't-

Oh, stop
looking for a
problem! Just
don't be all
mushy around
me. I'm PDA
intolerant.



You're smiling
too much. Are
you plotting
something?

No, I was
just thinking
about how our
knees were sorta
making out under
the table...

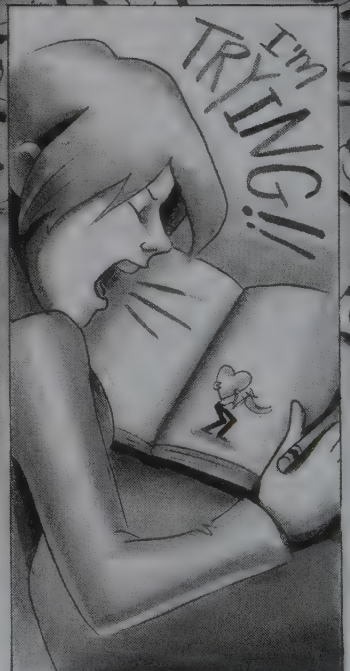
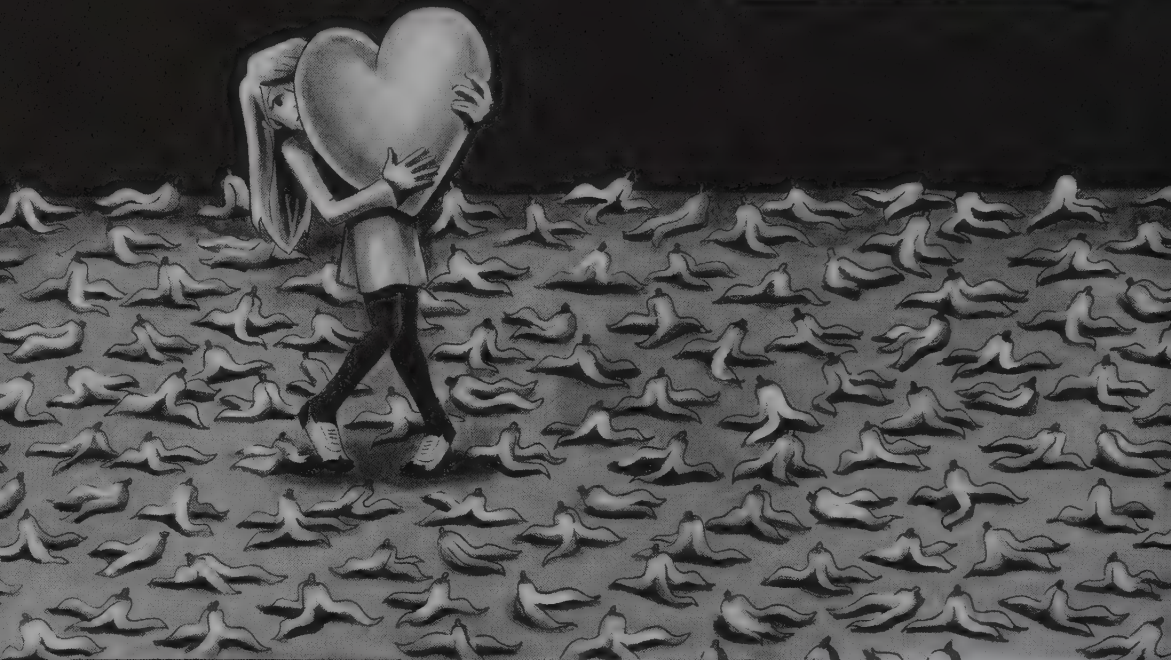
Wanna step it
up a notch?

Um...



You are
downright
scandalous.

This is all so new for me.
It's wonderful and terrifying.
Why does he like me?
What if things go wrong?
What if, what if, what if...

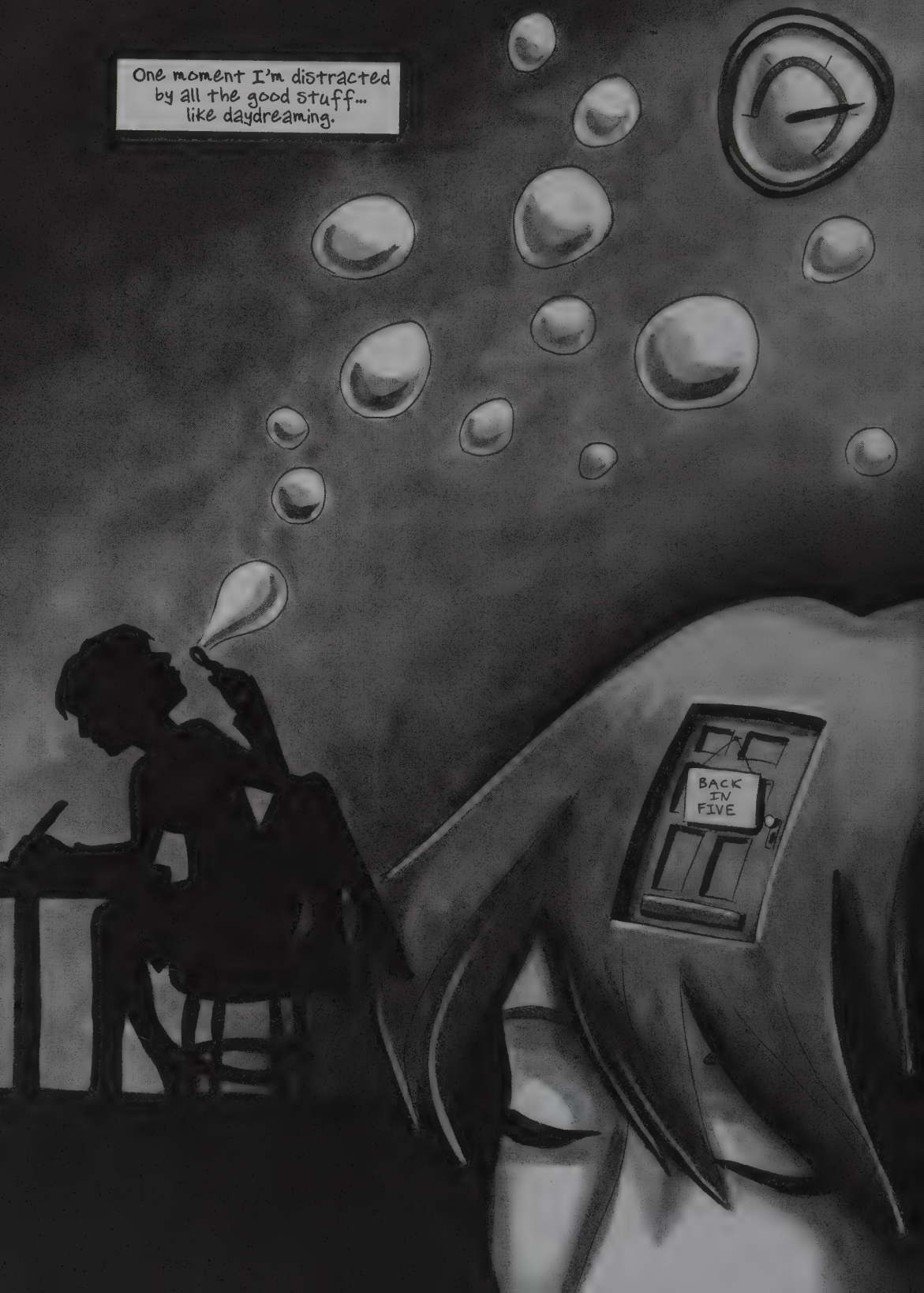


I'm trying to let myself
feel things instead of
avoiding them...

...but there is
so much going
on at any given
moment.

...but there is
so much going
on at any given
moment.

One moment I'm distracted
by all the good stuff...
like daydreaming.



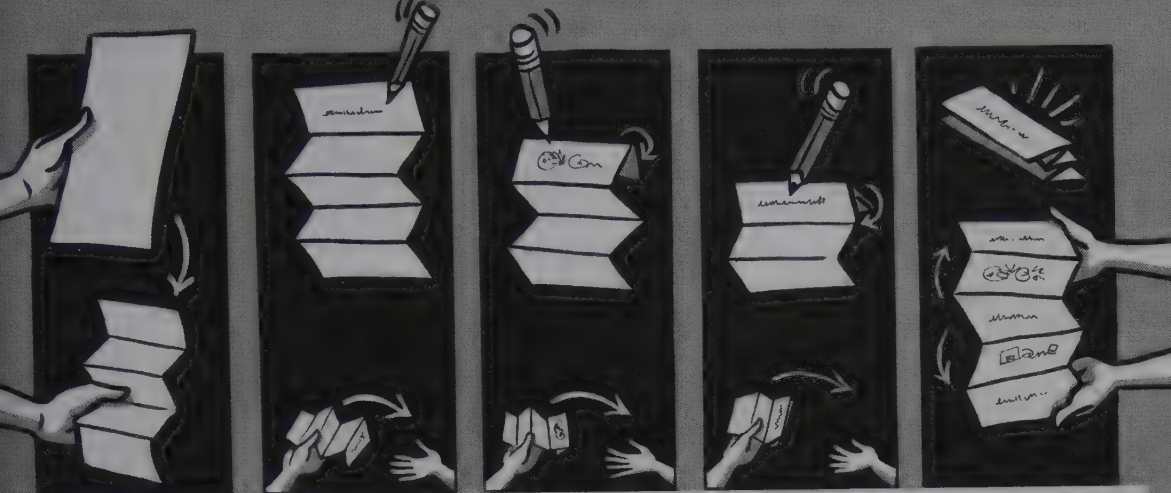


But then the next minute I'm
overwhelmed with the bad stuff...
like social anxiety.

In fourth period we had a sub, so Longo and I made some drawings together. It made me think of Diana, since we used to do the same thing back in Virginia.



And then we all played a game of Drawing Telephone. How do you play? Well...



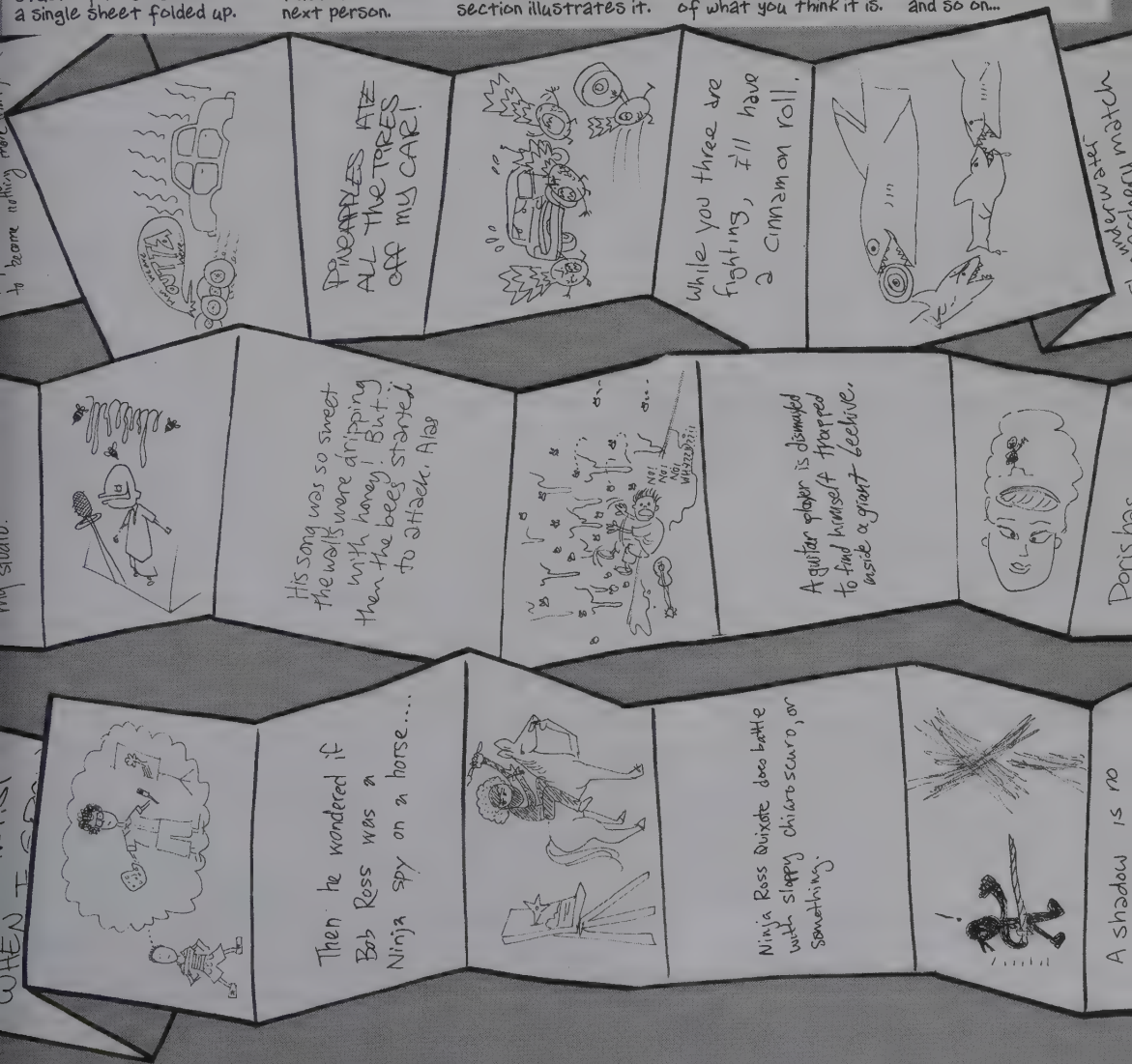
Each person needs pencil and paper. You can use a stack of loose sheets or a single sheet folded up.

Write a sentence. Any sentence! Pass it to the next person.

Next person reads the sentence, folds it back, and in the next section illustrates it.

Pass it. Look at the drawing, fold it back, and write a sentence of what you think it is.

Pass it. Next person illustrates the new sentence. And so on, and so on...





She said, "If you REALLY want to impress me, dance the chicken dance like you never have before!"



Spinning Bellhaven is amused by dancing country



The 4... happens... is fingers



Okay, agents, I have another idea...

Another round of telephone? Or a grander escapade?

An escapade. I think we should hide Easter eggs.

Nice gesture, Red, but Easter was a month ago.

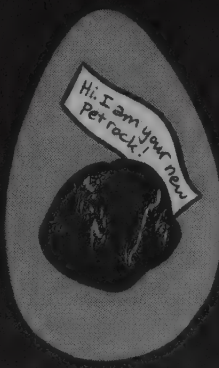
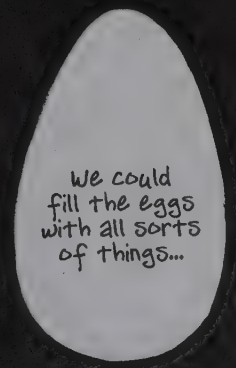
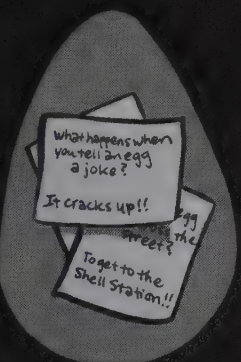
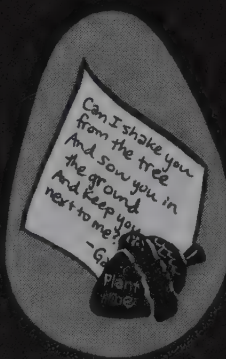
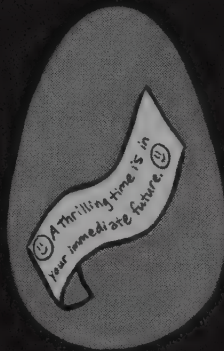
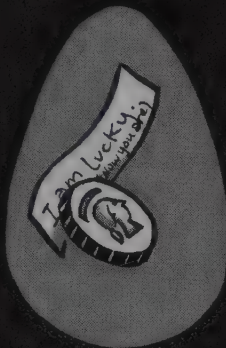
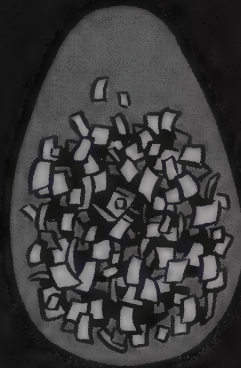
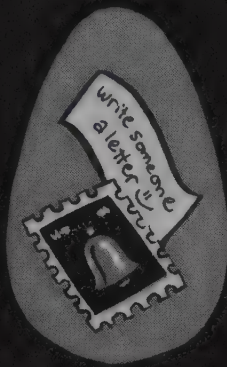
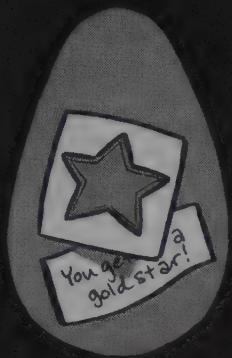
That's why it will be so surprising! Look, I found a whole bunch of plastic eggs. They'd be perfect!



Hmm, it's random. Baffling. Sneaky. I like it.

What will we put inside them?







F Manhattan



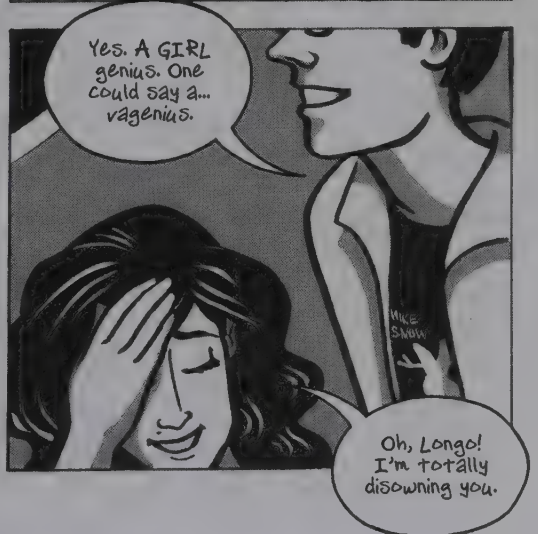
I don't know if people will pick them up. I mean, people here are more suspicious than in Virginia.

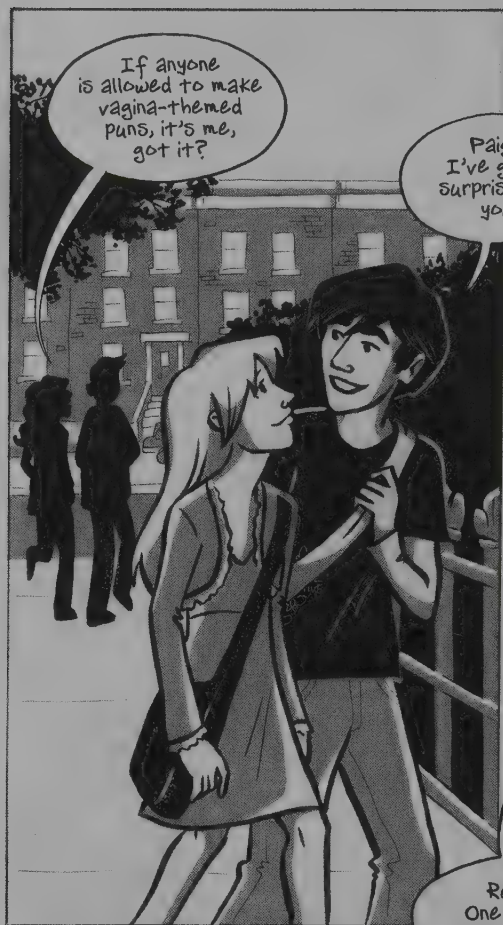
They might think it's a terrorist thing.

You never know! There could be flocks of evil terrorist chickens.

What, like exploding eggs??





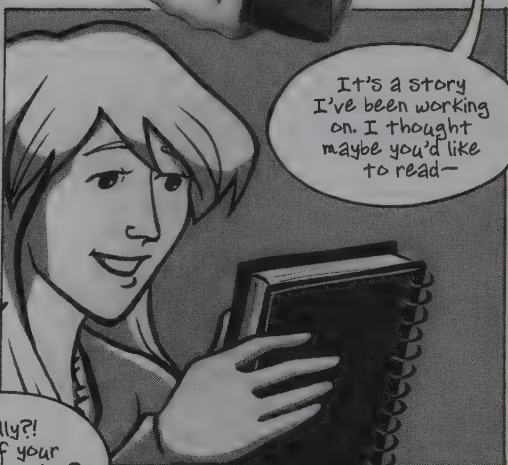


If anyone is allowed to make vagina-themed puns, it's me, got it?

Paige, I've got a surprise for you.



It's my notebook.

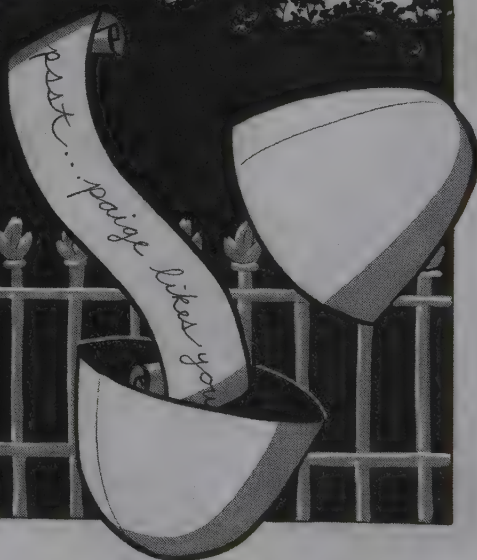


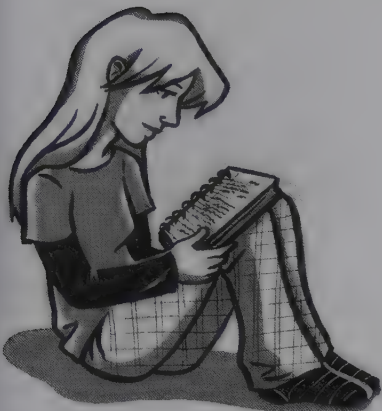
It's a story I've been working on. I thought maybe you'd like to read—

Really?! One of your secret stories? Thank you!



I always love surprises.





Reading Gabe's story felt strange, like I was invading his privacy somehow. I decided to copy down part of it here... I hope he doesn't mind.

"...but our story didn't start 'Once upon a time...,'" the boy objected.

"Did, too." The old man sniffed. "But we didn't hear it, because we're lucky enough right now to be the tale, not he who tells it."

"Well, who's telling it?" the boy asked, looking around as though he expected to see a storyteller nearby.

"Maybe you, one day, to another young mind. Maybe another teller of tales readin' this, not knowin' they're in the middle of their own story."

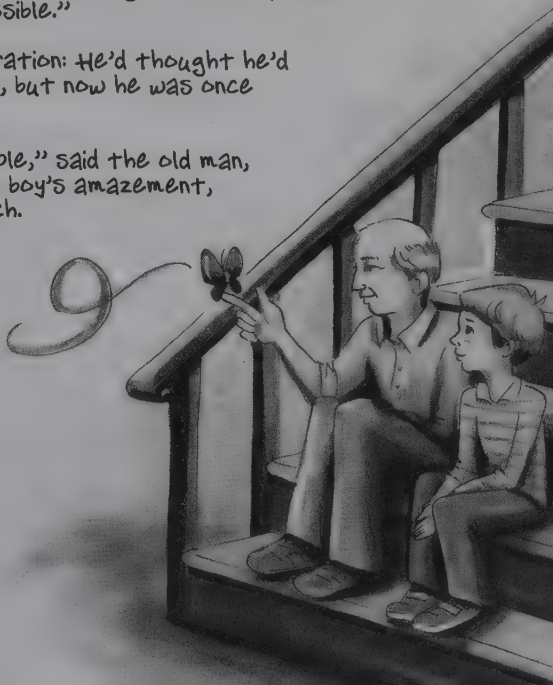
"I still don't get why stories are important," said the boy. "What's wrong with leaving happenings just being stuff that, y'know, happened?"

The old man clicked his tongue and said, "Now that is a right-thinkin' question! I'll tell you why: Tellin' stories makes us impossible."

The boy threw his hands up in the air in exasperation: He'd thought he'd been on the edge of understanding the old man, but now he was once again adrift in seeming contradictions.

"Take Mister Flutterbye, if you need an example," said the old man, extending a finger like a gnarled branch. To the boy's amazement, a butterfly came to rest on the offered perch.

"Mister Flutterbye, to your eyes, is just a bug, ain't he?" The old man didn't wait for confirmation. "But for all you know, he could have a wife and kids back home, an' you pinchin' his wings there could have ended up deprivin' 'em of a husband an' a father, couldn't it? Unlikely, I know, but it all depends on the kind of story. As another for instance, while this little fella here is flappin' those wings of his, he could be causin' a hurricane on the other side of the world."



"Now you really are making things up."

"No I ain't. That's a kind of magic your little friend Tommy could take a lifetime and never understand, too. This world ain't about how big you are, or how little.

"It's about how every little thing touches every other thing in creation. But if you don't like that, how about we look at you?"

"Me?"

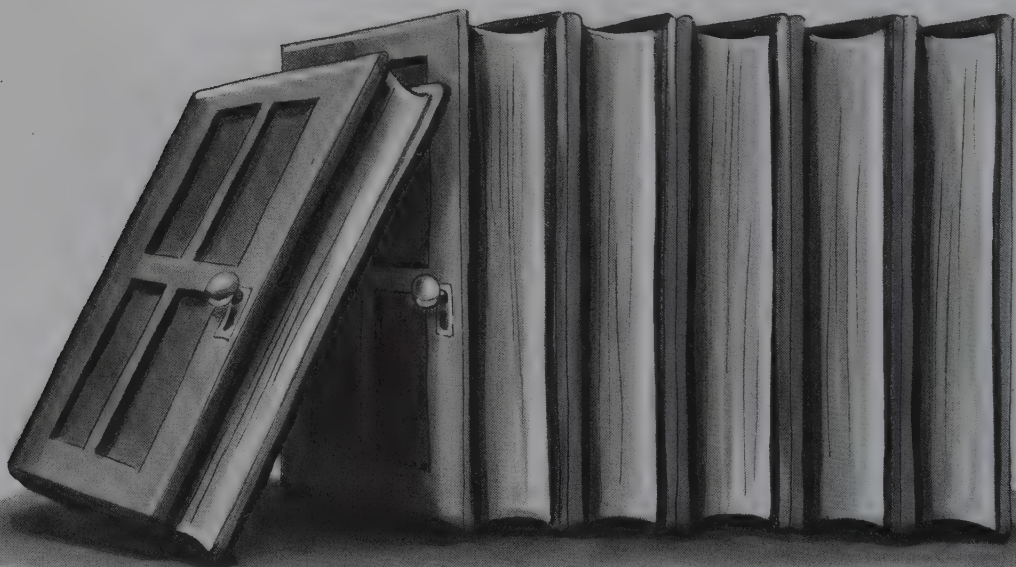
"Yup, you. Ain't nothin' in the world more impossible than a little boy."

"What do you mean?" The boy had never thought of himself as...well, as anything more complicated than a little boy.

"Little boys are like doors into the impossible. Like when you're playin' games. When you're playin' a game of make-believe, are you still you? Or are you a spy? Or a cowboy? Or a knight? Who are you when you're playin' those games? And what do you think you're doin' when you play those games? You're tellin' another story."

The old man waved his hand, dismissing the butterfly the way someone else would dismiss a misunderstanding. "It ain't even just when you're playin', either." He pointed his gnarled finger at the boy.

"Every little boy is his mother's little angel, and his father's reflection. And because all little boys are a little bit wild, they all have a bit of the jungle in 'em behind the eyes...every little boy is a tiger. An' every little boy is someone's shadow, and a hundred other things besides, because every little boy—heck, every child—is a door into the impossible."

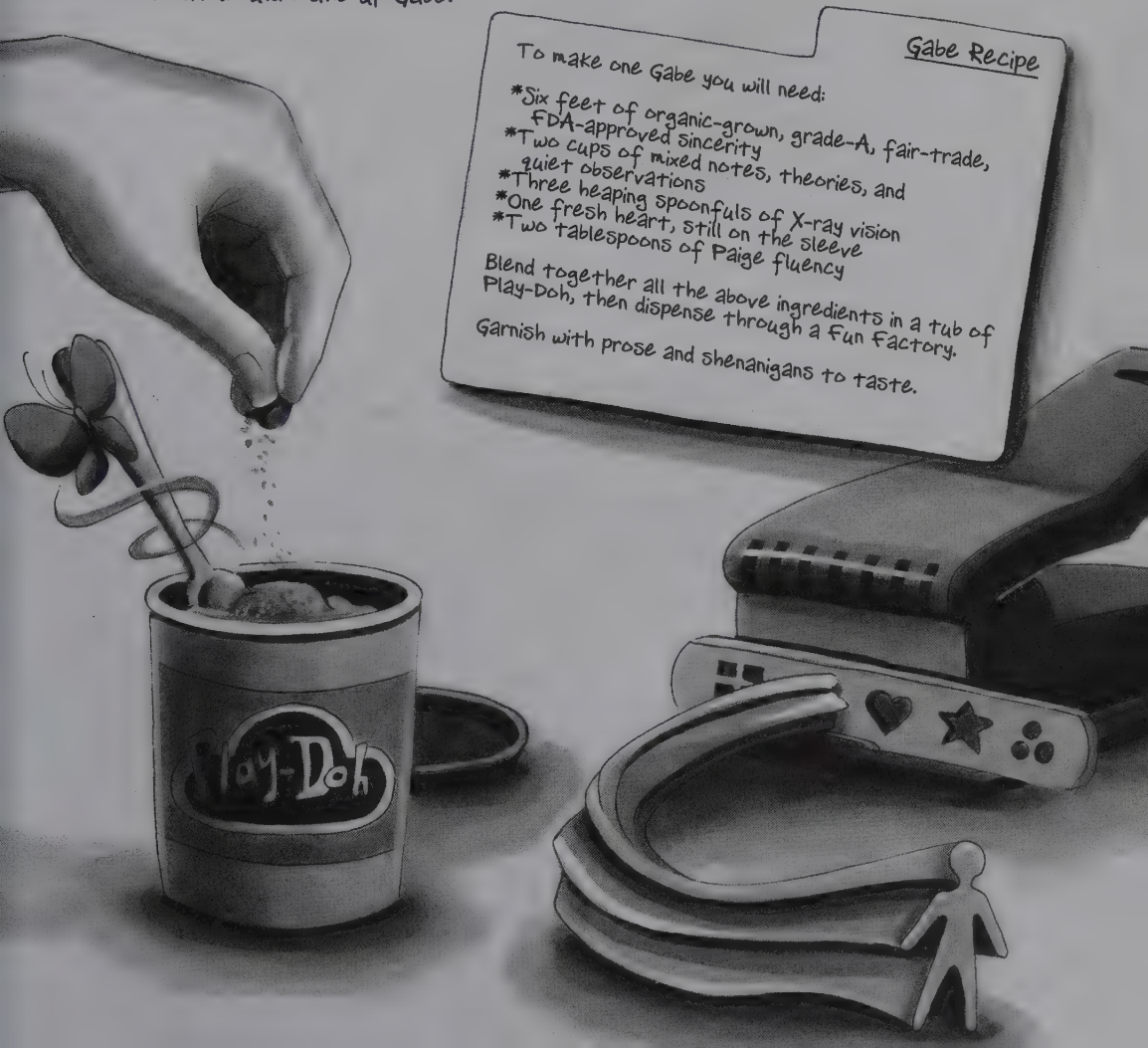


"And what are you, then? Are you lots of things, too?"

The old man chuckled, and the boy felt a warm glow of pride in his chest; he was only favored with that laugh when he had impressed the old man with his understanding.

"Old men ain't nothin' except old men. Old men is what you kids become when you've stopped being everything else. An' I'll tell you somethin', my boy, bein' an old man is the one thing you don't get to choose..."

I like the idea that people
are made up of different
things...so I wondered
what would make up Gabe.



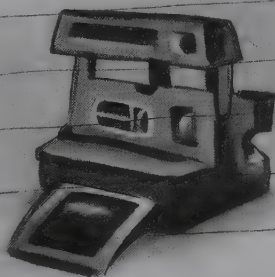


I used to feel bad asking for help because it felt so one-sided...

... but perhaps we both can help (even inspire?) each other.

Rule #8

Stay stimulated
to avoid creative
constipation.

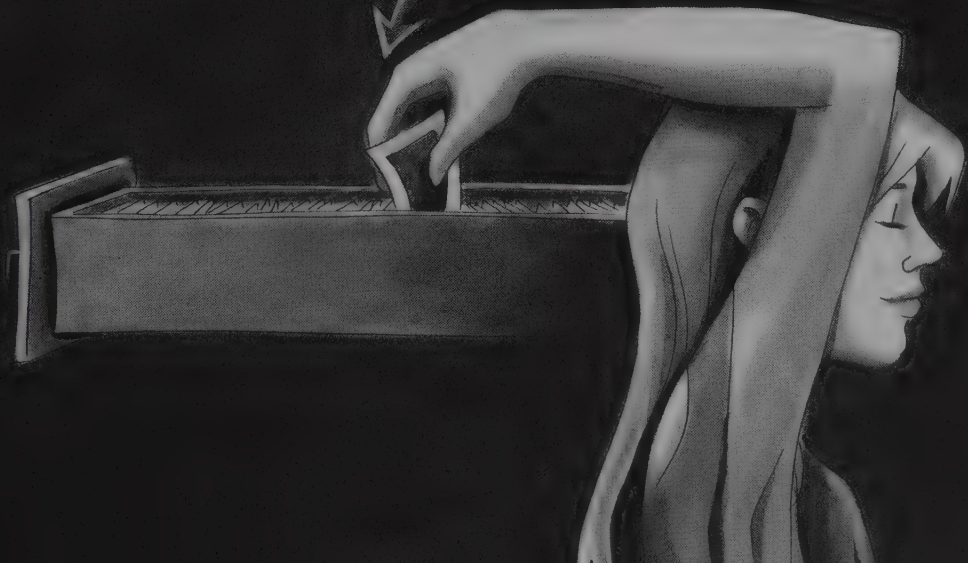
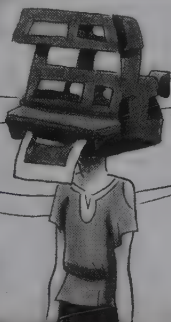
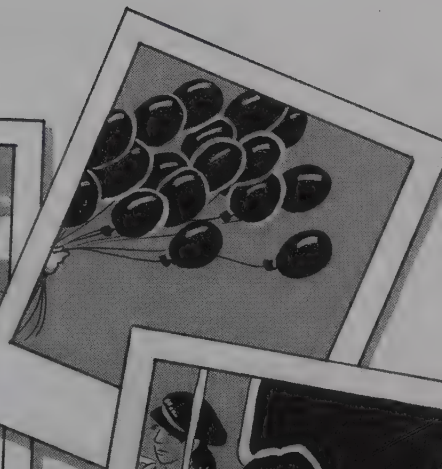


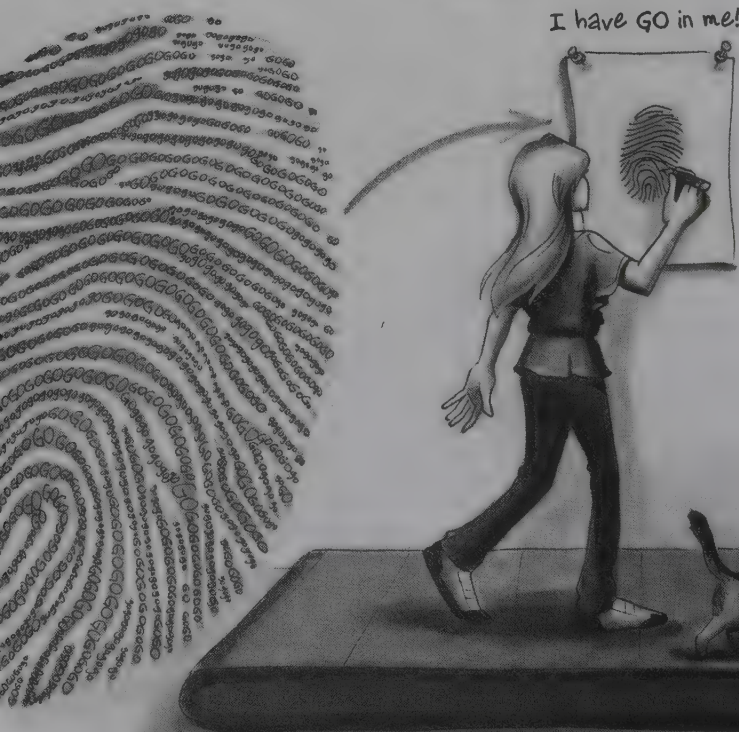
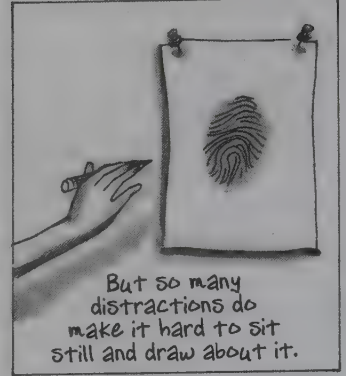
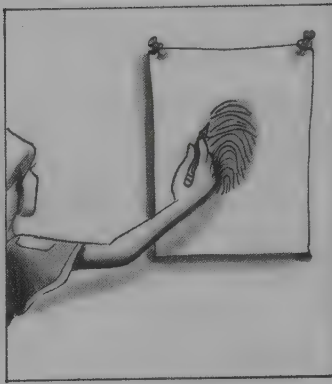
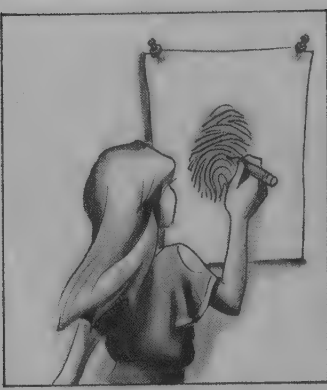
-June-



I've been playing in the same dollhouse my whole life, and I've only just NOW started adding new rooms, exploring new scenes and subcultures. Jules calls this "reality surfing."





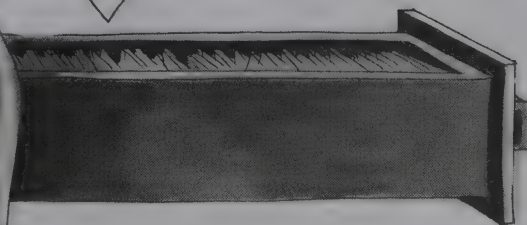


This is yet another thing I inherited from my mom, who also has trouble sitting still. 22



Go, go, go...
Where should I
take my art next?

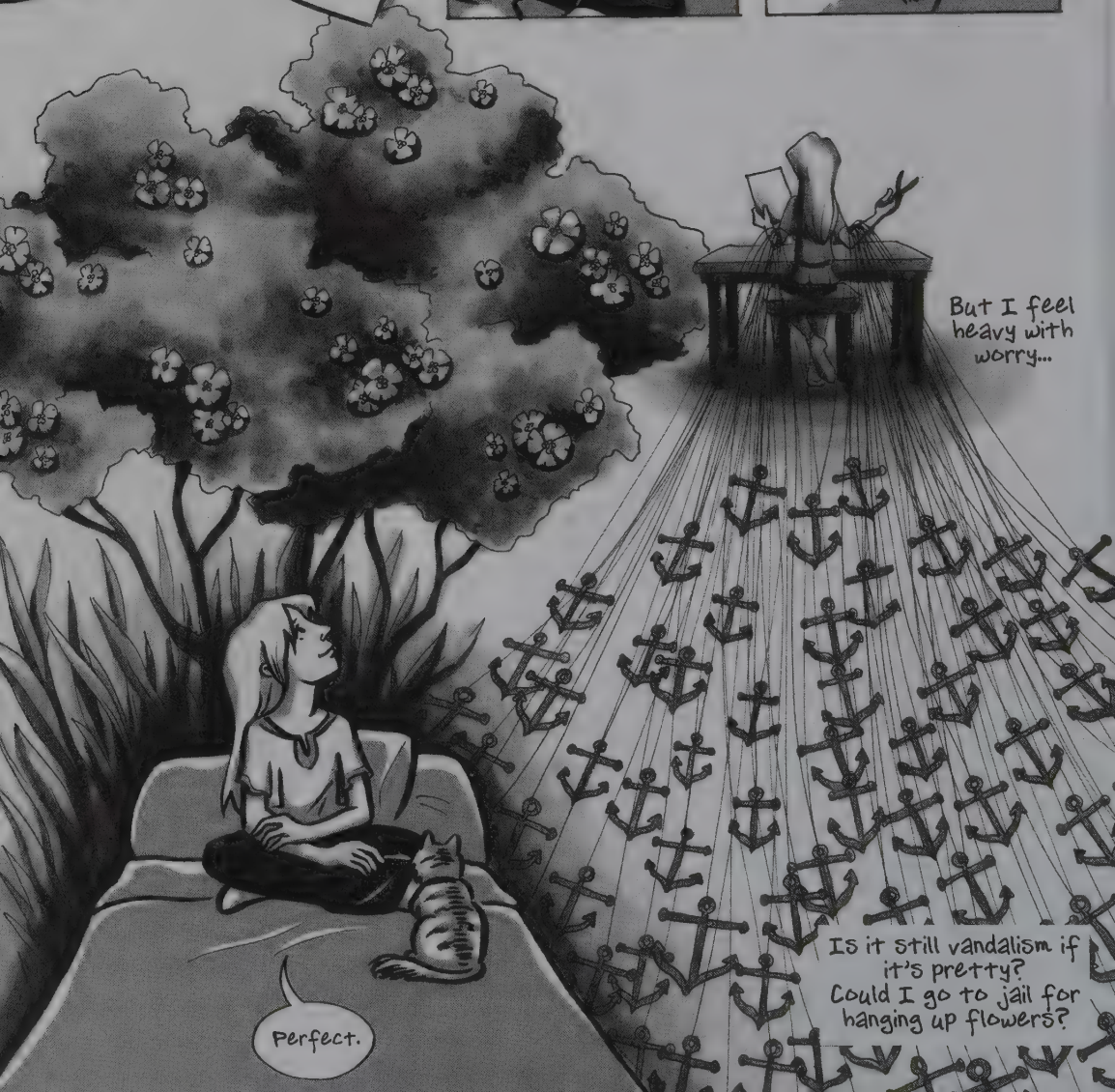
Maybe I should bring my
2-D world out into the
real world for a visit?





Street art—
that's it! I can
hang up drawings
with wheat paste!

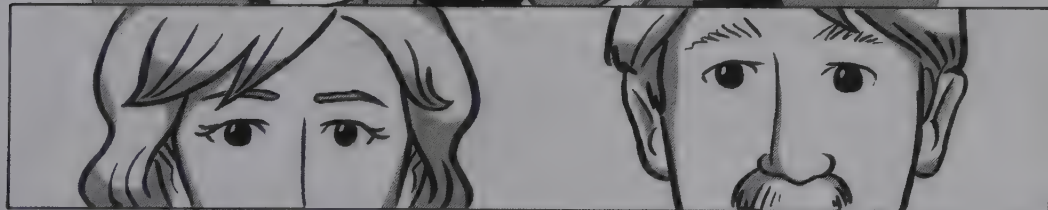
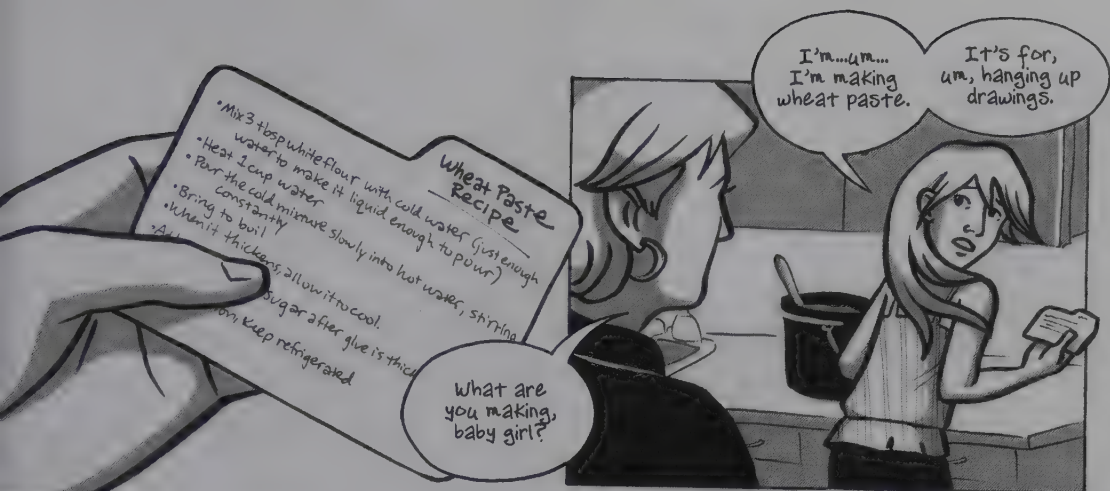
But what to
draw? I want to
hang up something
to make this city
feel like home...




But I feel
heavy with
worry...

Perfect.

Is it still vandalism if
it's pretty?
Could I go to jail for
hanging up flowers?





Dogwoods...
Why, these look
like the ones we
had back in
our yard.

I wanted to
share my favorite
thing from the
mountains. I miss all
those trees...

These are
really beautiful
drawings, Paige.

But you're sixteen.
And it's illegal. And I
don't like the idea of
you on the streets
late at night, alone—

Oh, I
wouldn't
be alone!

Gabe, Jules,
and Longo are
going with me!

And we're going
to this building that's,
like, a street art
gallery; the owners
don't mind.

And actually, it's
best not to hang
art really late,
because you stand
out MORE.

Sounds like
you've done
your research.

You know,
I might have changed on
the surface a bit, but
I'm the same over-
organized Paige I always
was. Now I just have
bigger ideas...

Your parents APPROVED?!

Only after a
LOT of convincing.
And rational arguments.
And I played the "I've
always had my head on
straight" card.

Where'd you learn to make this paste stuff?

YouTube.

Okay, Crow,
you're my
assistant.

That's me, the
trusty sidekick...

Canary and Sparrow,
you're the lookouts.

And what's your code name?

I'm Finch, you dodo. Okay, so if you see someone, just do a birdcall. That's our signal.

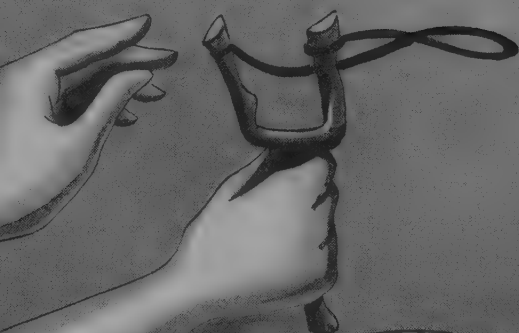


Some people help the world
by planting real trees...
I plant drawn ones.



In my mind, we live up
to our feathery code
names. We won't
apologize for being birds!

Right when I was
starting to fly really high...
I get brought back down
to earth.



Thanks again
for your help! I
guess I'll see
you guys on
Monday?



Yeah, unless
you need our help
with something
ELSE before
then...

What??



Sorry, Red, I
didn't mean to turn
all snapdragon
on you.

It's just
that you've been
making me feel like
your sidekick
lately.

Um, see
you two
later...

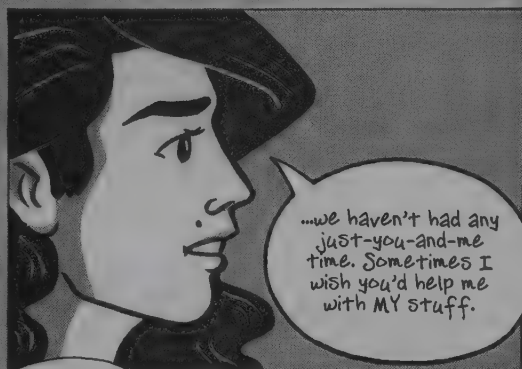
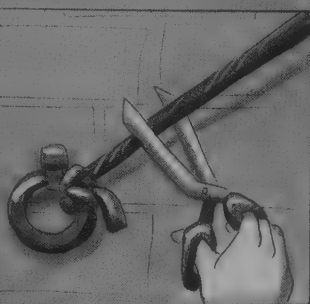
Abort,
abort!

Okay, so you know I love the stuff we've been doing.

And how you've been helping Longo get back into his art. And your awkward charm.

BUT

But...



...we haven't had any just-you-and-me time. Sometimes I wish you'd help me with MY stuff.



See, she's too cool for you.

See, you are a terrible friend! Awful!

See, you are totally self-absorbed.

You're right, I AM totally hogging you...

See, this is why it's easier to be alone.

Don't beat yourself up! Look, I know you're just coming out of your shell.

And I'm used to having those guys all to myself. Nobody's perfect.

How about we work on this together? Girl date?

Sounds...good. What did you have in mind?



Sweaty ham, no thank you.

You know I'm a veggie, right?



"Sweaty Ham, No Thank You"

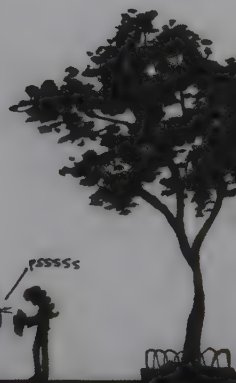
Cool ranch chips, macaroni and cheese,
deviled eggs, you know what I need.
I've got a ham and cheddar wrapped
all nice and tight;
A little mayonnaise is gonna treat me right.

Oh no, it's getting hot today.
Oh no, my lunch is going to melt away.
I can tell from here that warm
cheddar won't do.
One thing to say...Sweaty ham, no thank you.

I need a Styrofoam cooler, a big bag of ice,
that would have been enough to keep
my sandwich nice.
Brown bag lunching is down for today,
how about a seven-layer guacamole-ay?

Oh no, it's getting hot today.
Oh no, my lunch is going to melt away.
I can tell from here that warm
cheddar won't do.
One thing to say...Sweaty ham, no thank you.

I helped Jules
out with new song
lyrics. And I came up
with a design for her
to stencil on album
sleeves and other
swag...

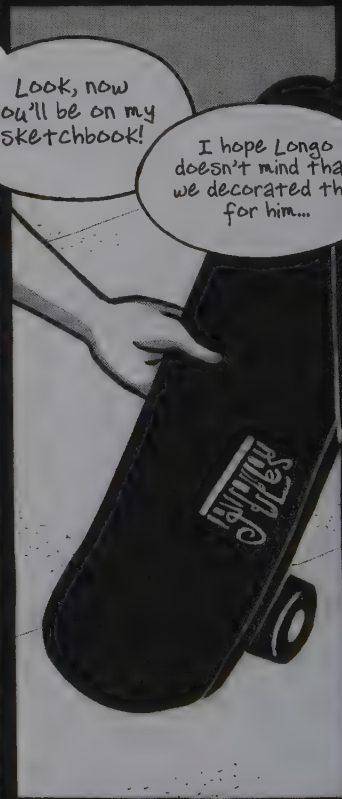
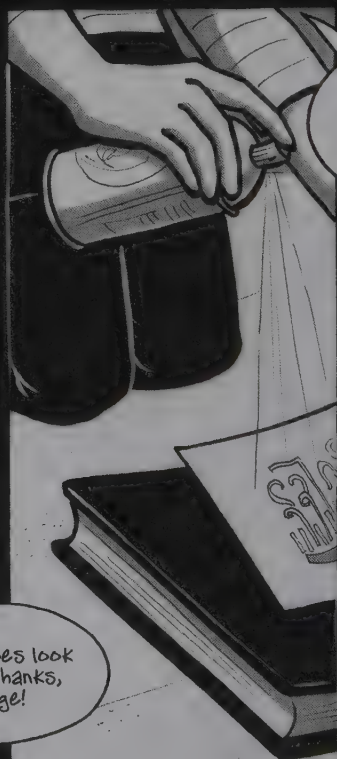


...then if you scoot
the stencil down and
spray, you get a nice
drop shadow.

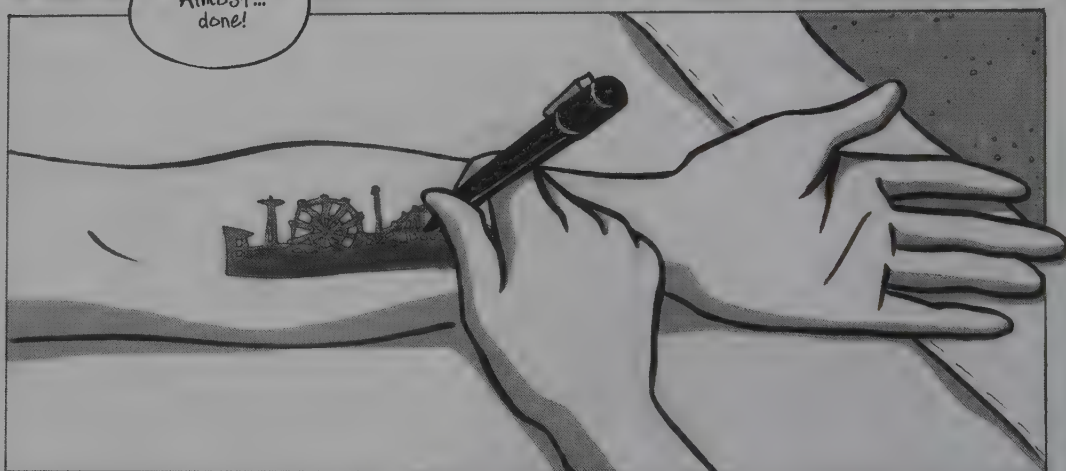
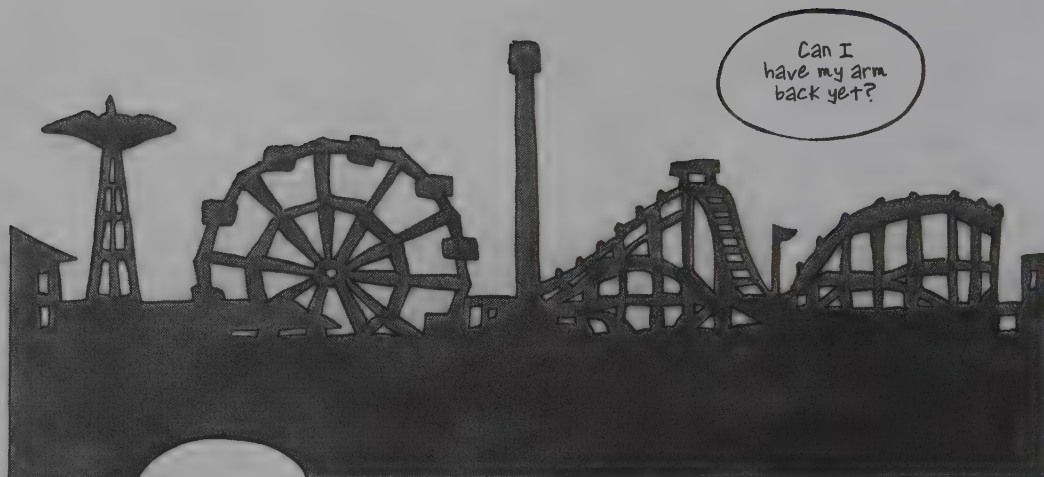
Look, now
you'll be on my
sketchbook!

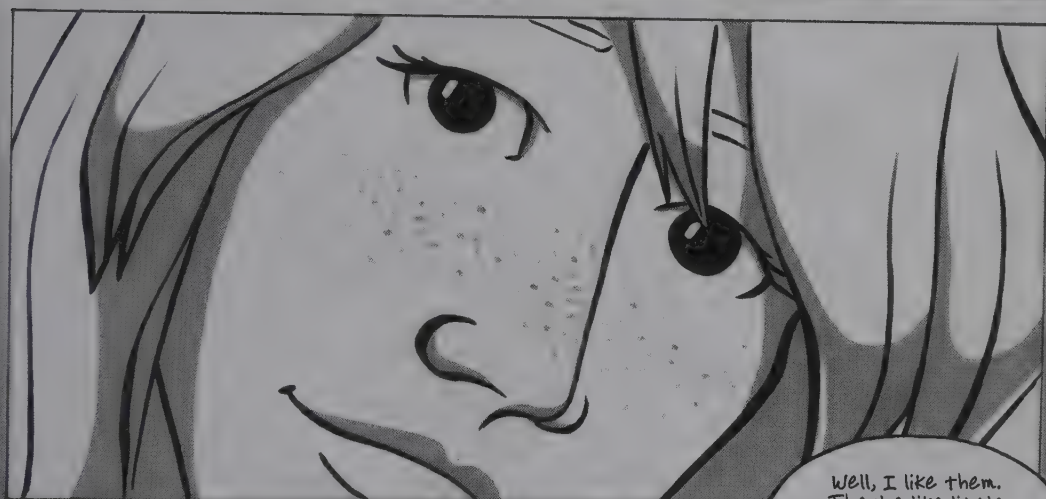
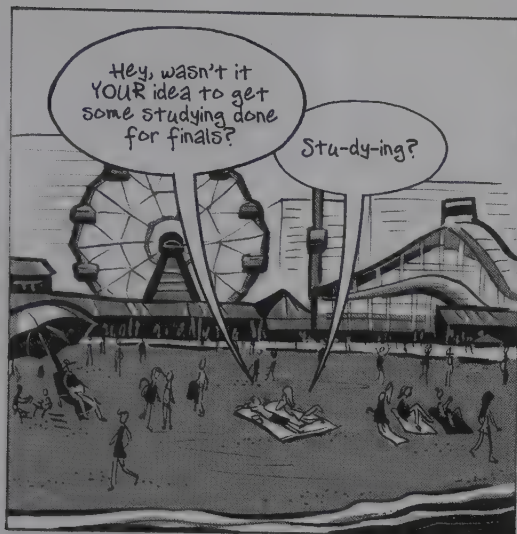
I hope Longo
doesn't mind that
we decorated this
for him...

That does look
cool! Thanks,
Paige!



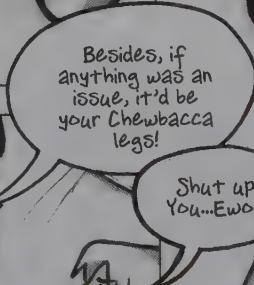
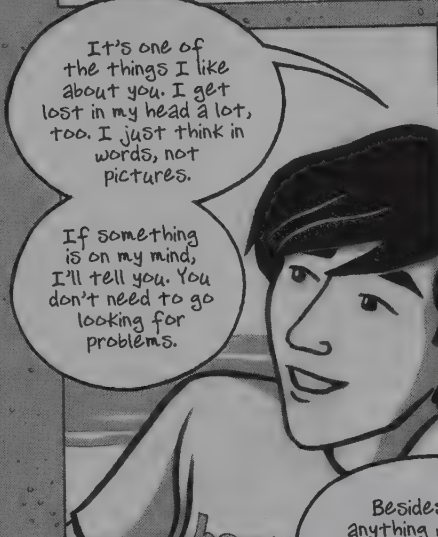
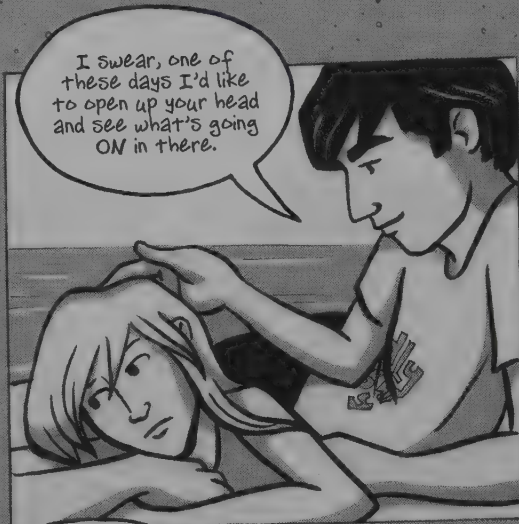


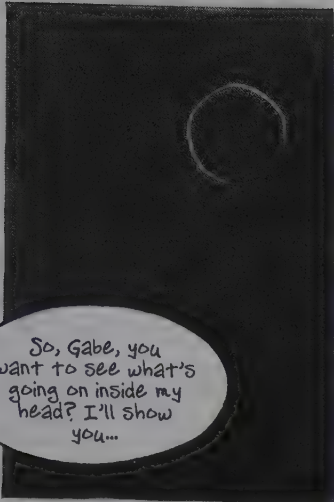




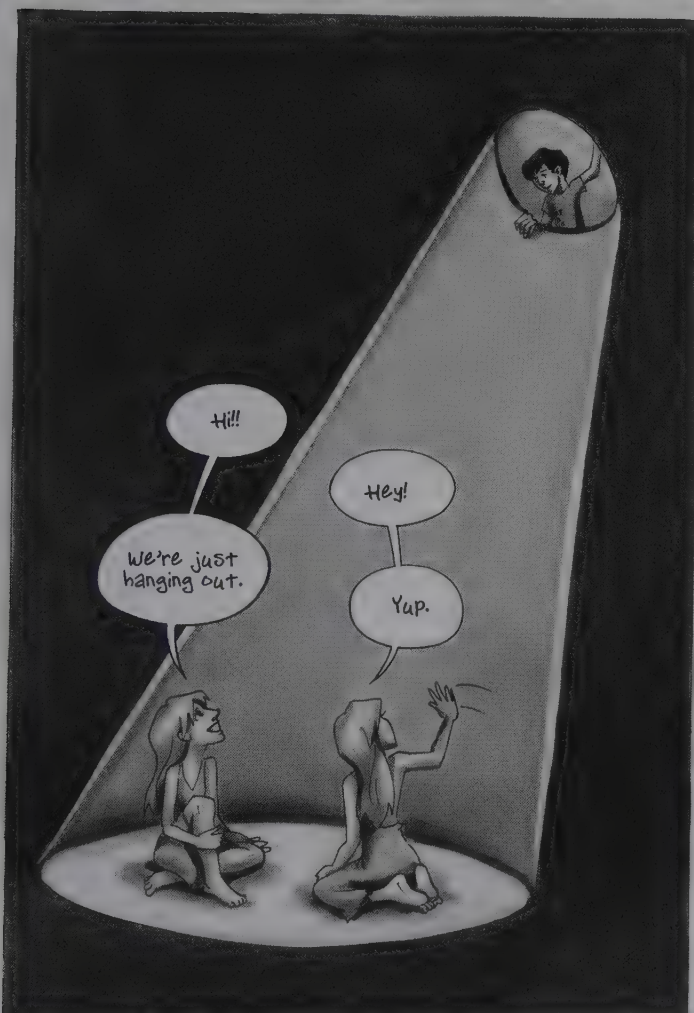
Well, I like them.
They're like little
constellations, like the
Milky Way across the
bridge of your nose.

Hmm, I
should draw
about that...





So, Gabe, you want to see what's going on inside my head? I'll show you...



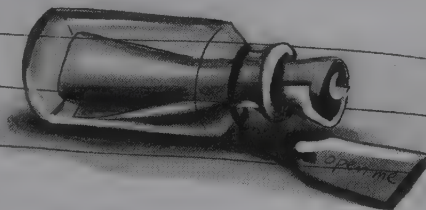
See? That's
what's going on in my
head. I'm just hanging
out. With me.
Playing.

Fishing for
possibilities.



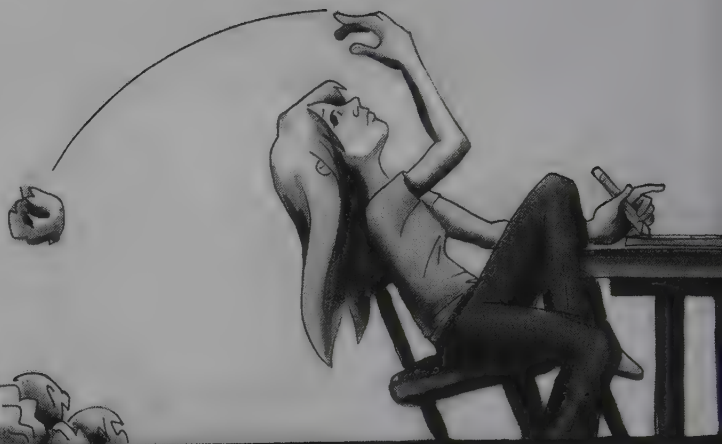
Rule #9

Trust your gut
instinct. Be honest with
yourself.

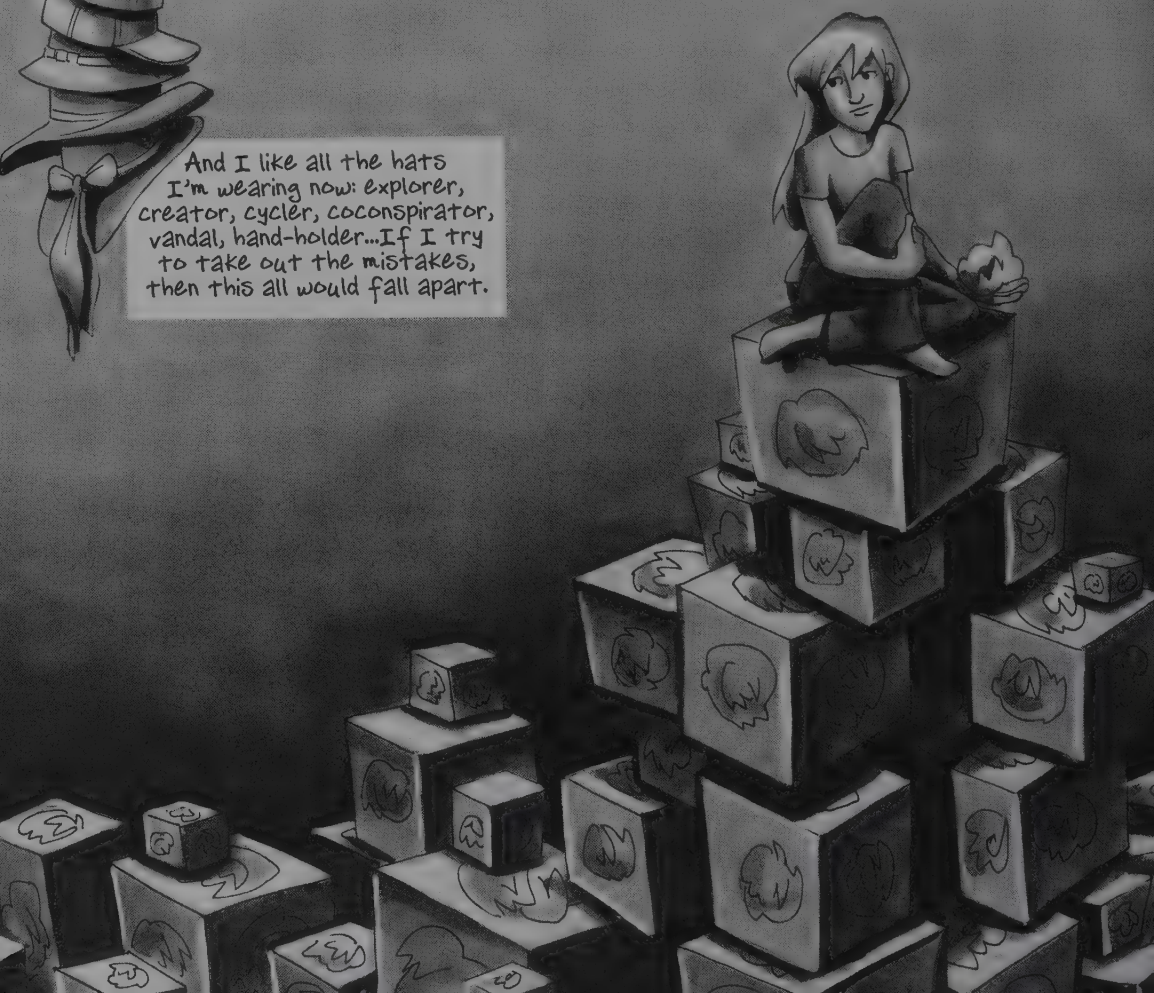


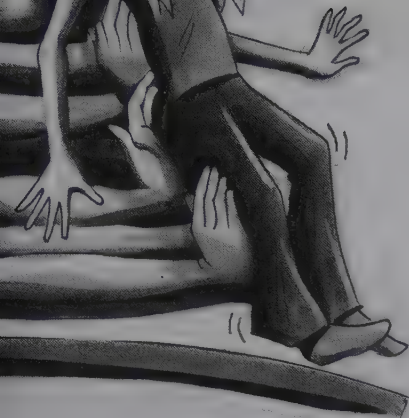
- July -

I've always been worried
about doing the RIGHT
thing instead of following
my gut. But all those wrong
things also helped get me
to where I am right now.

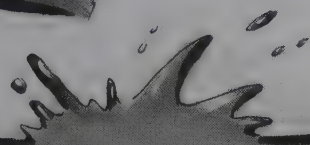


And I like all the hats
I'm wearing now: explorer,
creator, cyclist, coconspirator,
vandal, hand-holder...If I try
to take out the mistakes,
then this all would fall apart.



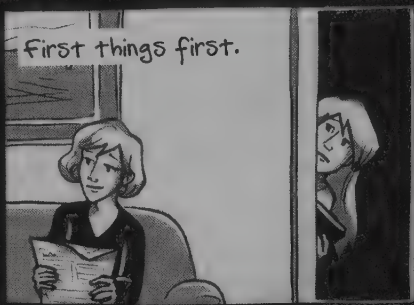


And what is my gut telling me now?
To take the plunge and trust myself.

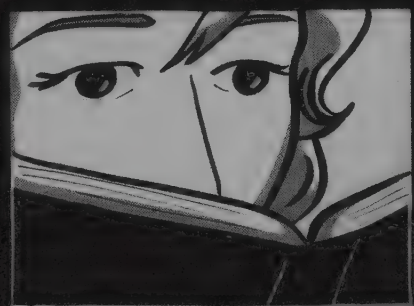
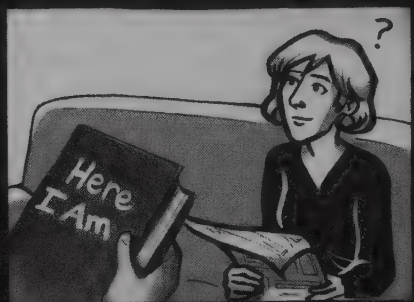


It's time to find
out if I can swim...

First things first.



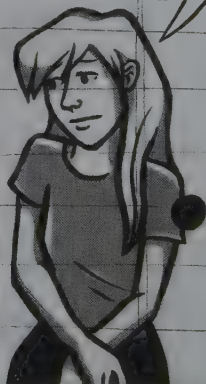
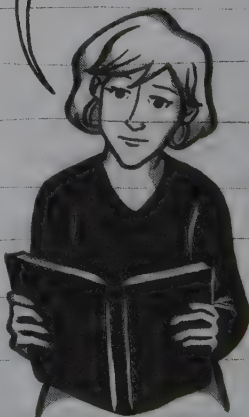
Watching her looking at
my drawings, I felt so
transparent. Paper-thin.



You've been
working on this
for months...Why
did you keep it a
secret?

For a while
I didn't share it
with anyone.
Just fear, I
guess.

But eventually
I started showing
it to Jules, Gabe,
and Longo...



I could never talk to my mom about things...and I really hoped you and I would be different.

I'm showing you now, aren't I?

You know, Paige, I don't expect you to be perfect.

Well, that's what it feels like...

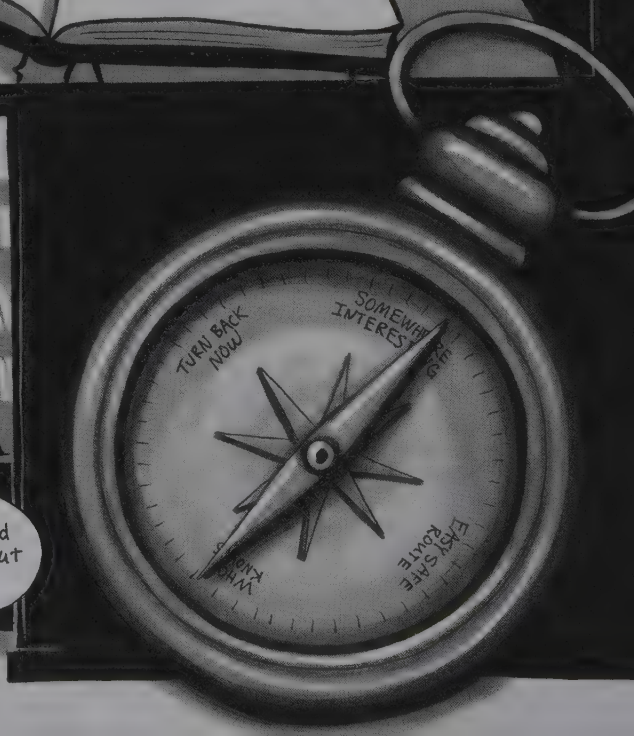
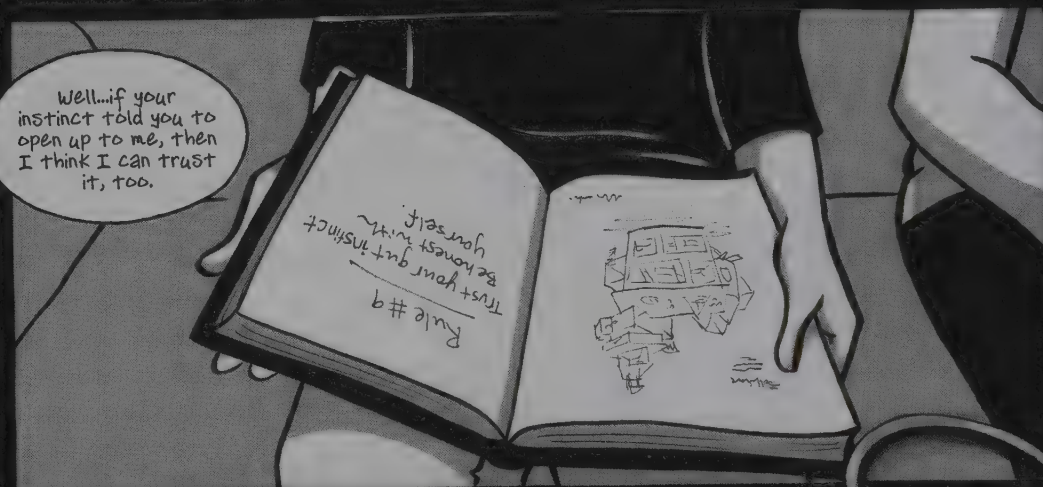
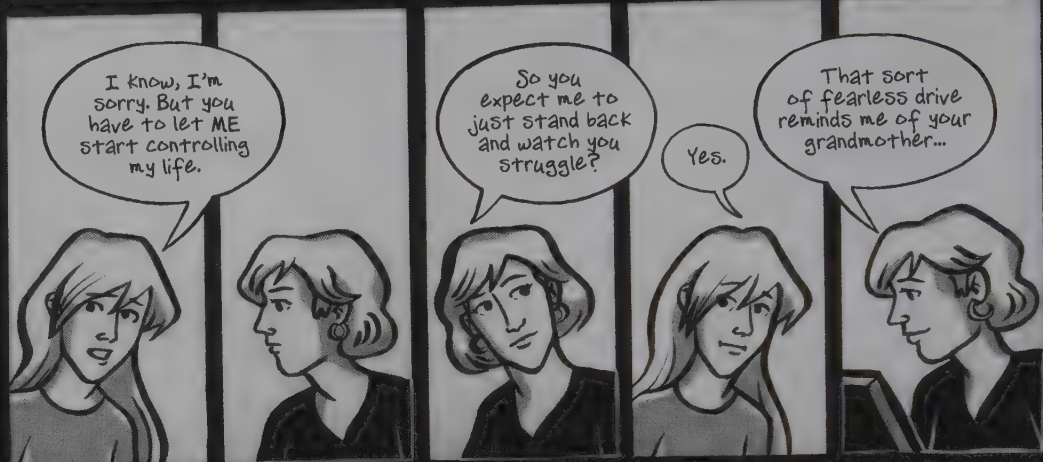
Growing up, my family was always poor and I was really self-conscious about what others thought of us.

That's why I decided to be different with my family. I wanted a stable, organized household. I know I can be a bit of a perfectionist—

Mom, you use the edge of an index card when you sign your name so it's in a straight line.

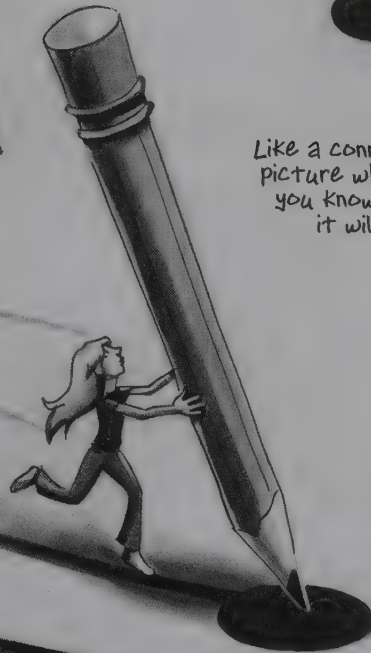
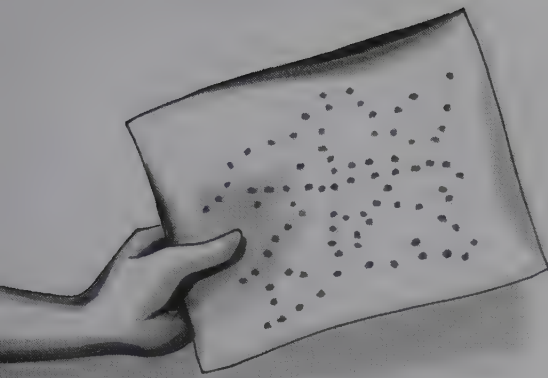
But this is just how I'm wired, Paige.

I hate to admit it, but we are similar. I can't accept my faults if I can't accept hers...



I suppose all moms have
an idea who they HOPE
their daughters will be.

Like a connect-the-dots
picture where you think
you know what shape
it will become.

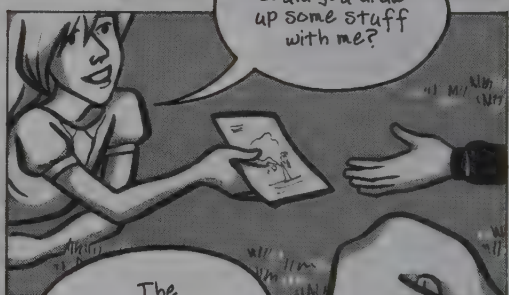
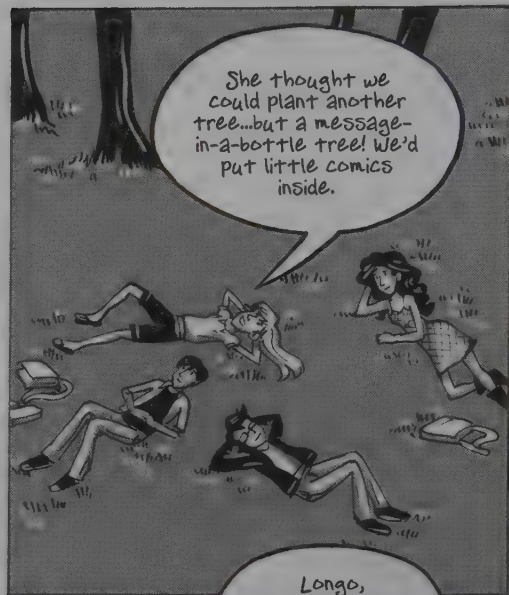
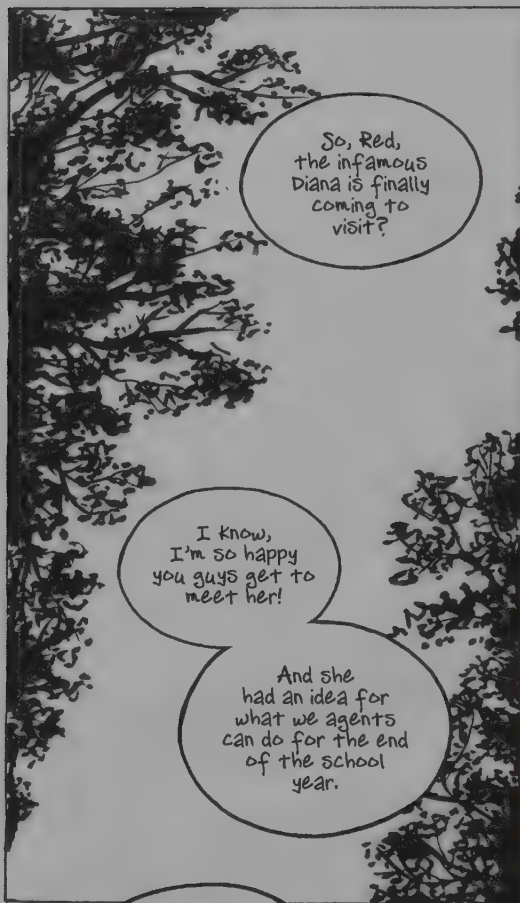


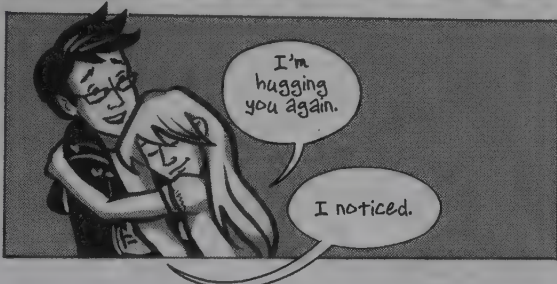
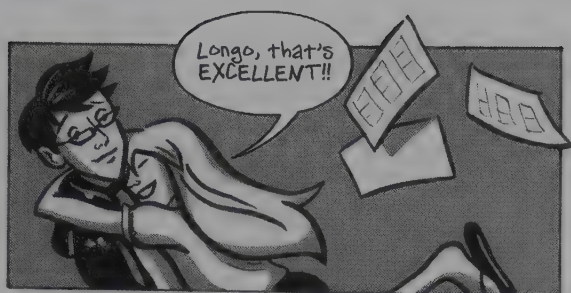
But then it's the daughter who
draws the lines, and she might
connect dots you didn't intend,
making a whole different picture.

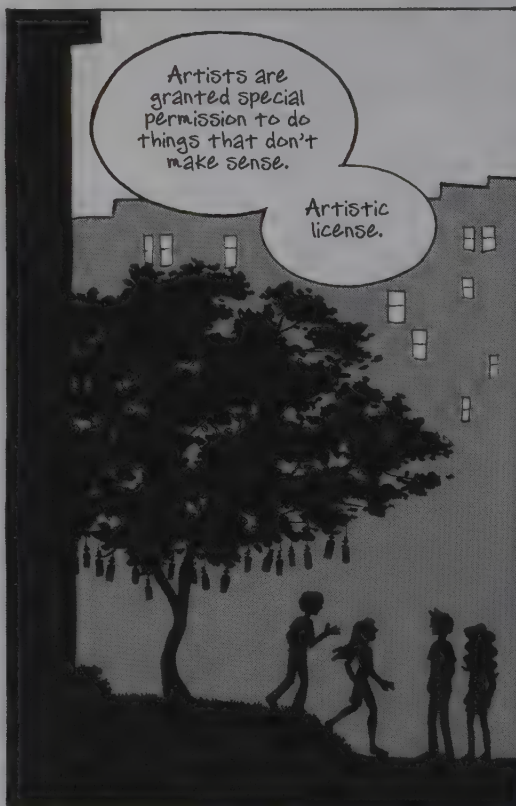
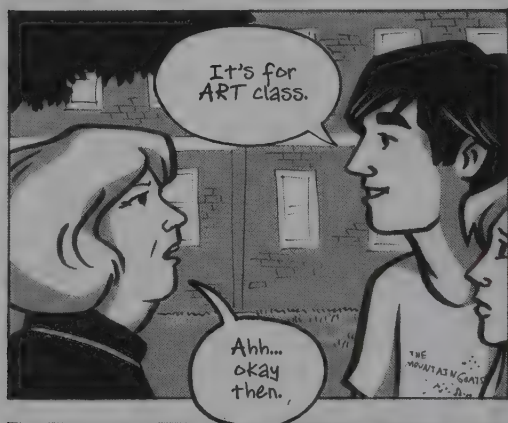
Is it gonna
be a unicorn?
Dolphin?
Squirrel?



So I've gotta trust the dots she's
given me, and she's gotta trust me
to draw the picture myself.







The next day...

Look!
People like it!
The villagers
rejoice!

That's great!
Next time maybe
we could plant a
tree that grows
sandwiches?
I'm hungry...

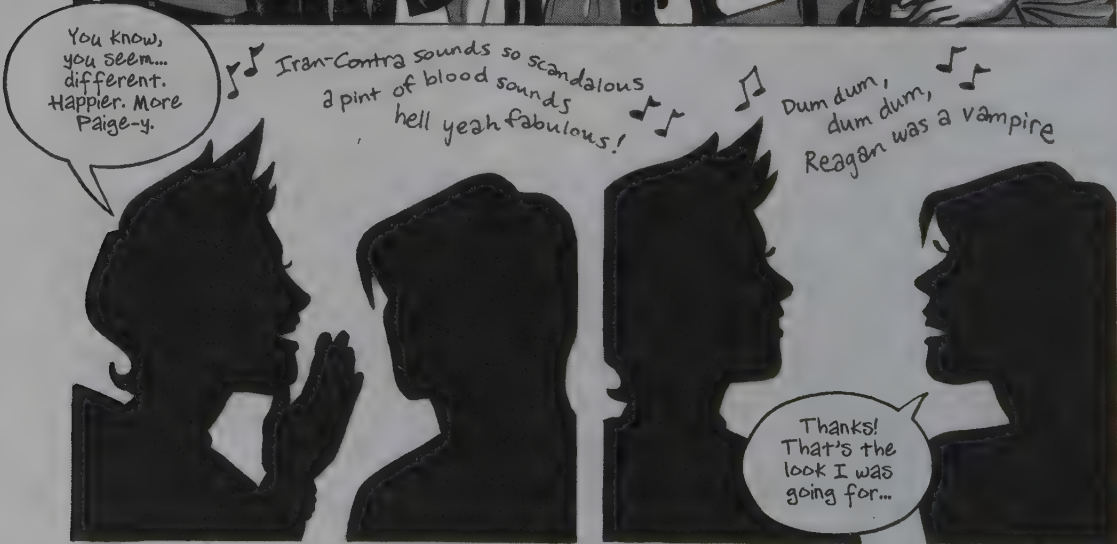
Perhaps
one made with
sweaty ham?

No
thank you.

Open Me

Keep the comic and reuse the
bottle to pass along your
message!





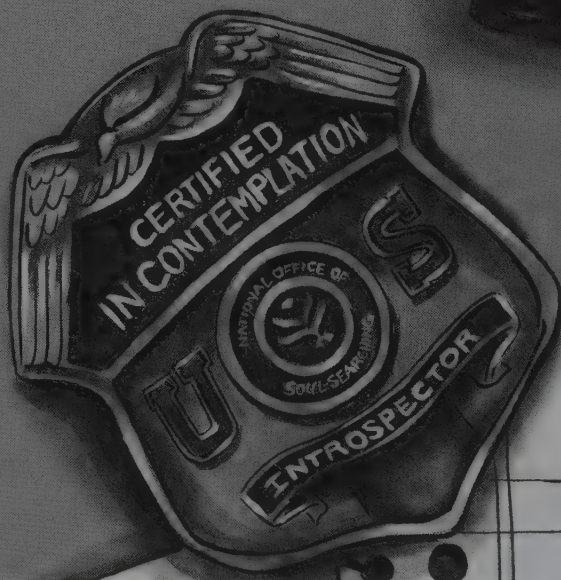
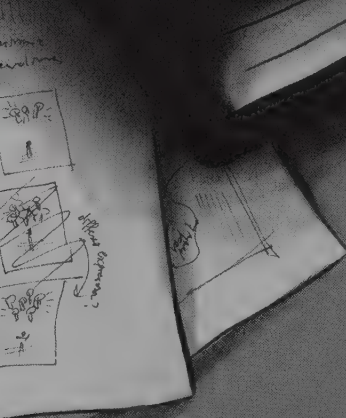
I might not be the writer
my parents expected, but
maybe I can live up to my
name in a different way...



There! That was the
moment it hit me!



It hit me...



...I AM an artist.



Fun Permission Slip

I me (guardian) hereby give permission
for myself (child) to be left unsupervised, encouraged
to misbehave, and overindulge in merriment. He/She is
authorized to act freely without apology or reprimand.

Yours Truly
Signature

Right Now!
Date



ARTISTIC LICENSE

Brooklyn, New York
Age: 16 years old
Gender: Female

Paige Turner
expires: Never

Paige Turner

Bye! Great show!

I'll meet you outside, Diana...

Wait, Paige!
You forgot something!

What did I-

Okay,
now you can go!

I think if I tried to paint what I was feeling, the pigment would be so intense, it wouldn't even stick to the canvas.

Your cheeks match your hair.

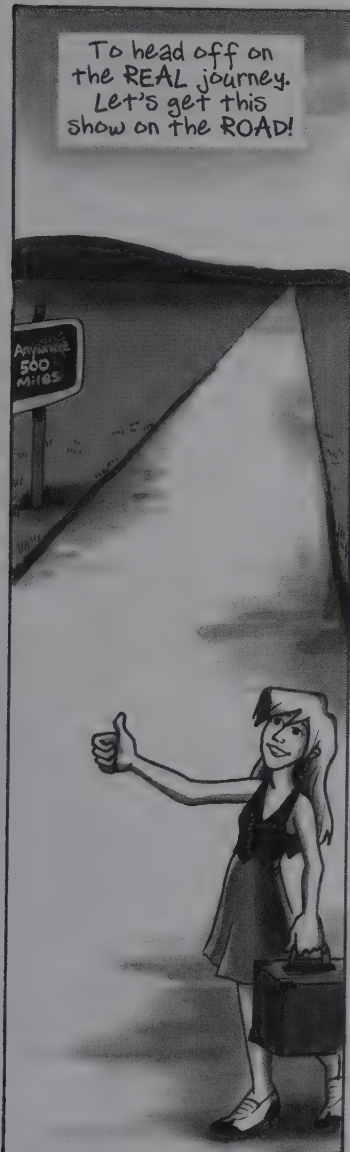
Shut up.

Subotnik

I feel like NOW things
are finally clicking into
place. I'm ready to get
started with my life.



To head off on
the REAL journey.
Let's get this
show on the ROAD!



I know, I know, I can't
be Jane Eyre anymore.
I have to make things
happen myself...





I am the Rocktapus,
my beats are dangerous.
If you are a sushi-fan I taste
delicious! My tentacles and
suckers make me well equipped for
surviving in the ocean or
rocking the kit!

Leave the ground behind us
I'll be floating 'round your lips
I am just a host
of arms holding
one fool wish.
Agent G



My name is Sharkules,
I swim the deepest seas
and I also rule the lowest
frequencies! My razor-sharp teeth
and super scales let all the little
fishes know that my bass
lines wait!

oob!

ghost boy

Agent L

Agent L

Agent L





It's up to me to grow
my own beanstalk if I
want to climb anywhere.



Acknowledgments

Special thanks to: My lovely family for always encouraging me to draw, for your support, and for your trust as my ideas grew perpetually (and foolishly/bravely) bigger. All my Charlottesville and New York friends for knowing when to drag me away from my desk...and for knowing how to inspire me to go back. Jason Longo, Jamie Rodger, Geoff Sprung, and Alex Dezden for contributing your words and drawings on behalf of my characters. Diana Arge, Bishop 203, Matt Mikas, Julie Bissell, and Christian Larson for your game of Drawing Telephone. Maya Rock, Dan Lazar, Maggie Lehrman, Chad W. Beckerman, and the folks at Abrams for taking a chance on me and my difficult-to-categorize artwork.

About the Author

Laura Lee Gullette, like Paige, grew up in Virginia and moved to New York. Also like Paige, she started sharing her personal drawings online in order to try to better understand herself and her adopted city. She has worked in art education and scenic painting, among other pursuits. This is her first graphic novel. She currently lives in Brooklyn, New York. Visit her online at whoispaige.com.





Page by Paige Soundtrack

(Selected musicians who were
referenced in the book)

Jules's Faves...

- "Infinity Guitars" - Sleigh Bells
- "Carpetbaggers" - Jenny Lewis
- "Easy" - Joanna Newsom
- "Better" - Regina Spektor
- "Cheated Hearts" - Yeah Yeah Yeahs

Gabe's Faves...

- "Hannah" - Freelance Whales
- "Scythian Empires" - Andrew Bird
- "Anthems for a 17-Year-Old Girl" - Broken Social Scene
- "Pavement Tune" - The Frames
- "All My Friends" - LCD Soundsystem
- "This Year" - The Mountain Goats
- "Exo-Politics" - Muse

Longo's Faves...

- "Animal" - Mike Snow
- "I'll Be Better" - Francis and the Lights

Paige's Faves...

- "I and Love and You" - The Avett Brothers
- "Ragged Wood" - Fleet Foxes
- "Dancing with Myself" - Nouvelle Vague
- "The Clockwise Witness" - DeVotchKa
- "40 Day Dream" - Edward Sharpe & the Magnetic Zeros
- "Gobbledigook" - Sigur Rós

Laura Lee's musician friends
who have inspired and supported her...

- "Golden Days" - The Damnwells
- "Purple Weather Girl" - Samuel Stiles
- "We Will Become Ourselves Reborn" - Ki:Theory
- "Up Against Life" - Small Town Workers
- "Gravity" - The Dirty Dishes
- "Thankless" - All of Fifteen
- "Rules of the Game" - Moneypenny
- "Going Through Changes" - Army of Me



For my mother, her mother,
and all quiet souls with
loud imaginations
-L.G.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

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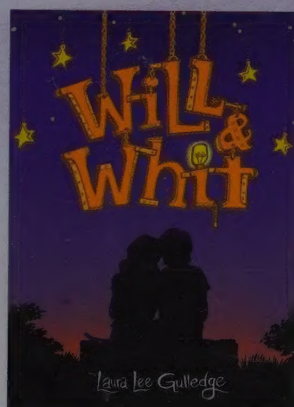
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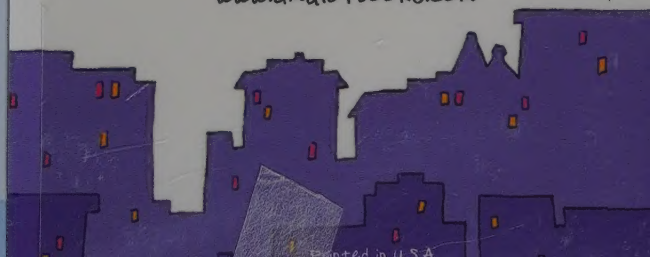
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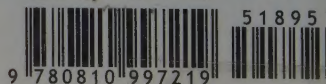
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